

INFANTILE CRISES ASSOCIATED WITH CHRISTMAS
(A PSYCHOANALYTIC INTERPRETATION)

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To my wife

Nancy

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INTRODUCTION

I. THE PROBLEM

The Christmas celebration is a complex cultural and psychological phenomenon. Christmas may bring joy and light to mankind during the darkest month of the year, but, for many, the very fact of Christmas makes the month darker. The festival is more than the formal commemoration of the birth of Jesus; it is a drama expressing particular and universal aspirations and emotions of man, a complex of feelings, attitudes, and needs, positive and negative, conscious and unconscious.

The focus of attention at Christmas is on the birth of the baby Jesus. On the surface it is a beautiful scene which calls forth feelings of care and tenderness. But it also confronts one with the fact of birth and the crises of the first months of life, and in the deeper layers of the psyche these facts produce a complex of intense feelings including fear, anxiety, depression, and rage. Birth is a moment of irreversible separation which destines the organism to death; it is, in itself, the death of the fetus as well as the birth of a baby. As Hegel said, "The hour of their birth is the hour of their death."¹ And deep within man's mind all separations are experienced as a threat of

¹Georg Hegel, Science of Logic (New York: Macmillan, 1929), I, 142.

death.²

Norman Brown describes man as "the animal which has separated the biological unity of life and death into conflicting opposites, and has subjected the conflicting opposites to repression."³ Even though out of consciousness, conflict and separation which exists within the psyche prevents integrity within a person and integration with others.

Thus death is an implicit dimension of the meaning and experience of Christmas, and, as will be discussed in Part I, plays a leading role in the historical traditions and dramas out of which Christmas has emerged.

The thesis of this study is that the so-called "negative" as well as the "positive" components of being are inherent and intrinsic to the experience of Christmas; that Christmas is not simply a time of love, peace, and joy, but that it is also a time of hate, conflict, and sorrow. The intensity of such feelings varies, of course, with each person, but such feelings are a part of the total composition of the Christmas experience of every person. And to the degree that such feelings remain in conflict, even though repressed and unconscious, wholeness (holiness) will be more an ideal sought after than a concrete

²Norman O. Brown, Life Against Death (New York: Vintage Books, 1959), p. 114.

³Ibid., p. 104.

reality.⁴

The ideals of peace and love are made so prominent a part of both the secular and religious life during the Christmas holiday, that no man can escape them. The emphasis accorded them contains the implied obligation that we all be loving and peaceful--whether we feel that way or not. What happens to the "negative" feelings? To experience them may create guilt and shame, and feelings of unworthiness; to repress them creates conflict and anxiety. In either case, such feelings may make Christmas a time of crisis for the celebrant.

If Christmas is to be a time of holiness and wholeness, then anything which causes division or separation needs to be understood and accepted, integrated and transcended. In the form of its celebration, ritual and myth Christmas may both increase the intensity of unresolved conflict, and provide for temporary and partial resolution of conflict.

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this dissertation is to inquire into Christmas from anthropological and psychoanalytic perspectives in an attempt to clarify the psychological processes of man's infantile beginnings which are implicated in both

⁴"Holy" comes from the Anglo-Saxon halig which is akin to the Anglo-Saxon hal, and means whole, and/or well.

the form and content of the festival, and which produce some of the personal conflicts and crises occurring during the holiday. An attempt is made to make more understandable the reasons why, for some, Christmas is a time of darkness, whereas for many it is a time of light. The emphasis is, then, upon the negative dimensions of Christmas experience, that is, upon the psychopathologic dimensions inherent in the festival. Instinctual needs and the affects of fear, anxiety, hostility, and guilt are focused upon, psychosexually and psychosocially, and in regard to behaviors and moods of Christmas. The ministry of the church is then discussed with appreciation for the relevance of some of its functions to the Christmas crises of persons' intra- and interpersonal lives, for they do provide for integration of threatening impulses and do aid the ego in its attempts to resolve the conflicts in crises.

III. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The inquiry is presented in three parts. The first is an anthropological review of the festival attempting to lift out some of the facts salient to the significance of Christmas in the deeper dimensions of man's psyche. Primary emphasis is accorded to the threat of death and the ways in which man has coped with this threat. It will be shown that birth and death are events producing fears and anxieties, and a need for reassurance, and that these

dynamics are particularly relevant to the form and celebration of Christmas. Some of the pagan festivals are presented from which Christmas assimilated its nature and form, with the intention of illustrating how social festivals provide for the expression and partial resolution of basic needs in the unconscious mind. Discussion is devoted to the effect of the season (the winter solstice) and the content of the festival as they confront one with the polarity of being and non-being. The significance of the Sun is discussed with regard to man's inclination to project his own concerns onto the Sun (and the life of Nature), an identification which effects a partial resolution of his anxiety about life and death.

A brief history of the English and early American Christmas is presented to show the continued assimilation and refinement of pagan rites and thoughts. Man, no matter how civilized and cultured, is still a creature of nature; although his ways of living change with his culture, the dynamic structure of his being remains unchanged from generation to generation.

Part II discusses life crises inherent in personal growth and development, and the psychoanalytic understanding of the psychosexual and psychosocial dynamics of birth, infancy, and young childhood. It will be shown that it is ultimately in these dimensions that much of the significance of Christmas can be understood, both in terms of

reason for being and of negative reactions to the holiday.

Chapters II, III, and IV of Part II are entitled and discussed according to the developmental stages as discussed by Erik Erikson. Erikson's structure and thought is relied upon because his theory outlines the sequence of phases of psychosocial development and relates these phases to psychosexual processes. His sequence thus parallels that of libido development and goes beyond it, spanning the whole life cycle. (See the Worksheet, p. 20.)

Each phase of the life cycle is characterized by a phase-specific developmental task which must be solved in it, though this solution is prepared in the previous phases and is worked out further in subsequent ones. Each phase is described in terms of the extremes of successful and unsuccessful solutions which can be arrived at in it, though in reality the outcome is a balance between these extremes: (1) basic trust vs. mistrust (Chapter II); (2) autonomy vs. shame and doubt (Chapter III); (3) initiative vs. guilt (Chapter IV).⁵

Erikson's psychosocial theory of ego development offers a conceptual explanation of the individual's social development by tracing the unfolding of the genetically

⁵The succeeding phases, not discussed in this study, are characterized by the solution of (4) industry vs. inferiority; (5) identity vs. diffusion; (6) intimacy vs. isolation; (7) generativity vs. stagnation; (8) integrity vs. despair and disgust.

social character of the human individual in the course of his encounters and conflicts with the social environment at each phase of his development. Thus it is not assumed that societal norms are grafted upon the genetically asocial individual by "socialization", but that the society into which the individual is born makes him its member by influencing the manner in which he solves the tasks of each phase of his development.

Erikson thus expands the sexual meaning of a stage of development into the social, and vice versa: the sexual is given more of a social significance and valence; and the social is given more of a sexual significance and valence. He considers libido theory as basic to motivation, but in a modified form which gives greater weight to social, cultural, and even historical influences than so-called "classical" psychoanalysis.

"Libido" is a term used to identify an innate energy in the organism which before Freud had received official and scientific recognition as sexual only when it became genital at the conclusion of childhood. Freud's discovery was, however, that the energy later to focus in the genitals is present and active long before the infant reaches the genital stage of development. The infant, as well as the child and adult, enjoys pleasure and sensual gratification, but also frustration and anxiety as this energy seeks its satisfaction. Libido theory thus communicates

the fact of pre-genital sexuality as a specific and crucial dimension of the human being. The first five of Erikson's developmental phases correspond to the psychosexual stages in psychoanalytic theory, in which libido is seen as operative and determinative. The first three stages (oral, anal, phallic), the subject matter of Chapters II, III, and IV of Part II, are characterized by a focus of this energy upon particular areas of the body. These zones and organs of libido theory are further explicated by Erikson as organ modes. The oral zone is thus the mode of incorporation; the anal zone is retentive, eliminative; the phallic, intrusive. In the mutuality and reciprocity of its early relationships, primarily with the mother, the child develops psychosexually and psychosocially in these organ modes. Moreover, corresponding to each stage is the solution of basic trust vs. mistrust, autonomy vs. doubt and shame and initiative vs. guilt.

Erikson has accomplished the feat of fusing libido theory with ethical theory and thereby presents a "schedule of basic virtues." These virtues are all properties of the healthy or "strong" person. He resists using the term "strength", however, in discussing the developmental roots and later evolutionary rationale of basic human qualities, finding it awkward. He prefers the term "virtue" for its meaning is more easily defined. In Latin virtue means virility, which suggests the combination of strength,

restraint, and courage.⁶ He certainly hesitates to consider manliness the official virtue of the universe which might be suggested by this understanding of the term "virtue." Old English gave a special meaning to the word which Erikson finds most suitable. It meant inherent strength or active quality, and was used, for example, for the undiminished potency of well-preserved medicines and liquors. He also points out that virtue and spirit once had interchangeable meanings--and not only in the virtue that endowed liquid spirits. Erikson means, then, in his use of the term virtue, "certain human qualities of strength related to that process by which ego strength may be developed from stage to stage and imparted from generation to generation."⁷

Hope, Will, and Purpose are the rudiments of virtue developed in childhood and are vitally interrelated to other segments of development; the psychosexual stages, the psychosocial crises, and the steps of cognitive maturation. Just as there is a mutual dependency in the schedule of crises and their solutions, i.e., autonomy is dependent upon trust, initiative is dependent upon autonomy, Will cannot be trained until Hope is secure, Purpose cannot be envisioned until Will has proven dependable.⁸

⁶Erik Erikson, Insight and Responsibility (New York: Norton, 1964), p. 113.

⁷Ibid.

⁸See Appendix A for complete list of the virtues and their definitions.

Each of the virtues, which emerge and become established through crisis, are implicit dimensions of both the theology and the psychology of Christmas, and serve, in this dissertation, as chapter titles in Part II. Hope, for example, is a vital quality--both theologically and psychologically--which sustains life in the face of death. The virtue Love, not explicitly discussed in this study, is certainly brought to the front when the imagery of the loving, caring mother and the virtue of Fidelity is so revered at Christmas. Yet this very imagery can produce a crisis for the woman who, thinking of herself as a failure as a mother, finds herself depressed and guilty during the holiday. Whether it be Hope, Love, Fidelity, Care or any of the other virtues confronted in the experience of Christmas, there will be re-experience of the particular crisis they represent but also of the prior virtues and crises. For, "whenever, for whatever reason, a later crisis is severe, earlier crises are revived."⁹ It is these earlier crises that are discussed in Part II.

Part III of the inquiry is devoted to discussion of the implications of the material presented with special regard to the Church and its participation in the festival of Christmas. The intensity of the crises awakened by Christmas will be severe or mild depending upon the

⁹Erikson, op. cit., p. 138.

strength of an individual's ego and his ego identity. Ego identity is viewed as a solution over against identity diffusion, and is dependent upon the successful resolutions of the early stage conflicts. A lasting ego identity cannot begin to exist without the characteristic of trust of the oral stage. The dynamics of the oral stage, the solution of trust and the virtue of Hope are considered, in this dissertation, as the critical dimension of both Christmas and the ministry of the church at Christmas. Reference to these dynamics pervades the discussion of the church in Part III.

Aided by the insights of psychoanalysis and ego psychology the church can recognize the depths and complexities of the festival, as persons experience and celebrate it according to the nature of their own psyches. The implication intended is that the church must assume responsibility for such insight and do what it can to insure the prospect of reconciliation and fulfillment for these same persons. To be a community of love and a resource for reconciliation the church must understand the dynamic factors preventing love and leading to disintegration and separation. It will be shown that some of the functions the church provides can aid in the ego's task of coping with the vicissitudes of life and the various dimensions and conflicts of Christmas.

IV. THE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This dissertation is presented within purposefully imposed limitations. The first is in regard to Part I, the anthropological review of Christmas, wherein the intention has been to reveal the significance of the being--non-being polarity as a determinant of Christmas, and the assimilation of pagan forms into the Christian celebration. The crisis of life and death is thus the principle dimension discussed. Further interpretation of the rites and myths presented, psychologically, sociologically, and theologically, has not been included within this study.

The developmental crises of life, Part II, are discussed in this inquiry within a psychoanalytic frame of reference. This theory was chosen because it is the most comprehensive and insightful account of the dynamics and development of personality.¹⁰ Thus, the moods and behaviors of Christmas are primarily interpreted in terms of the basic instinctual forces of sexuality and aggression. The author acknowledges the deficiencies in scope, e.g. the absence of an adequate theory of learning, and the slant in emphasis (instinctual) of psychoanalytic theory. No matter how much stress we place on the importance of organismic variables, we cannot deny that everything we think, feel,

¹⁰Irving Sarnoff, Personality, Dynamics and Development (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1962), p. X.

and do occurs within a cultural context. Ego psychology, well represented by Erik Erikson, is providing psychoanalytic theory with the means and knowledge needed to remove its deficiencies. Erikson's insights into psychosocial dynamics are complimentary to the psychosexual dynamics of psychoanalytic theory and have thus been included in this study.

The inquiry into the psychodynamics of the experience of Christmas is limited to discussion of birth and the first three psychosexual, psychosocial developmental phases. They are considered in terms of the dynamics and potential virtues of each conflictual stage, and the incorporation of these factors in the experience of Christmas is discussed. This limitation thus restricts the inquiry to the formative experiences of the first four or five years of life, the memories of which remain primarily unconscious throughout life and serve as the foundation upon which later development depends.

An additional limitation regarding the crises of life is that they are discussed psychologically. Even though reference to the thought of Paul Tillich is made in this study, a theological discussion of crises, per se, has not been attempted.

Its being the purpose of this dissertation to inquire into and clarify some of the psychic processes intrinsic to the experience of Christmas, the study is

limited in discussing the theological meanings of Christmas. No attempt is made to trace the development of theology, nor to present the church's understanding of Christmas, past or present. Neither is there discussion of myth and rite in terms of the conscious meanings they have, nor of the cultures in which they developed and by which they were influenced. When they are discussed in this inquiry it is for the purpose of identifying some of the functions they serve with regard to pre-genital psychodynamics.

The study is also limited in discussing ways of helping persons in conflict during the holiday. Part III includes discussion of some such "helps", and of basic, general attitudes and approaches in which persons can find help. Further discussion of "How to help" must be left to future research.

V. A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There is an abundance of material written about Christmas, but little of it discusses the psychological dimensions of the meaning and experience of the festival. Most of the literature has to do with Christmas customs and traditions. The American Christmas¹¹ by James H. Barnett, is a pioneer effort in the sociological study of Christmas and a valuable aid in understanding both the

¹¹James H. Barnett, The American Christmas (New York: Macmillan, 1954).

festival and its American expression from a sociological point of view.

The journals provided more in the way of discussion and interpretation of Christmas, psychologically, but even there, the resources are limited. The fact that the research was restricted to psychoanalytic theory imposed some limitations, but in reviewing the psychiatric and psychological indices relatively few articles devoted to Christmas were found. It has been interesting, however, to note the number of articles published in December, 1966, in popular magazines and newspapers, having to do with the psychology of Christmas. The emotions and behavior of people during the holiday is receiving greater attention. Reference to some of these articles is made in this study.

The psychoanalytic literature pertaining to Christmas includes the following writings:

Ernest Jones¹² felt that Christmas represented psychologically an ideal of resolution of family discord through reunion and that it owed its perennial attraction to the hope that all religions attempted to solve on a cosmic stage the loves and hatreds originating in the interactions of children and parents.

¹²Ernest Jones, "The Significance of Christmas," Essays in Applied Psychoanalysis (New York: International Universities Press, 1964), II, pp. 212-224.

L. Jekels¹³ surmised that the introduction of the festival of Christ's nativity indicated a growing tendency to regard the Son as coequal with the Father. He could see a wish, born of a "grandiose identification" with Jesus, that if the Son be the equal of the Father, there would be neither supremacy nor subordination, and therefore, because all was unity, equality and harmony, guilt (basically oedipal) would cease to exist.

Jule Eisenbud¹⁴ briefly described the courses of two female patients who reacted adversely to Christmas while they were undergoing psychoanalysis. In each case the woman suffered from intense penis envy. The first arranged during her adulthood Christmas times to act out a childhood tragedy in which she had been promised by her mother that Santa Claus would bring her whatever she desired. She had chosen to ask for a penis with which she felt she could compete with her favored brother for her mother's love. When she failed to realize her ambition, she was bitterly resentful. Her later Christmas times were marked by her arranging repeatedly to be disappointed and rejected, as a result of which she felt depressed and anxious. The second

¹³L. Jekels, "The Psychology of the Festival of Christmas," in his Selected Papers (New York: International Universities Press, 1952), p. 142.

¹⁴Jule Eisenbud, "Negative Reactions to Christmas," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, X:4 (1941), 639.

woman had a brother also and compared what she would get at Christmas time to what he had to play with. She, too, was depressed and furious that Santa Claus did not bring her a penis. In each of the patients, this central theme, as would be assumed, was surrounded by varied ramifications.

Richard Sterba¹⁵ illustrated similarities between the mode of celebration of Christmas and the customs surrounding childbirth. He was struck by the long period of preparatory excitement, secret anticipation, the last minute flurry of preparation, the prohibition about entering the rooms containing the gifts, and the relief of tension afforded by the delivery which characterized both events. He indicated symbolic similarities: Santa Claus brings a bag of gifts down the chimney and delivers them through the fireplace. He felt Christmas stirred up unconscious fantasies of childbirth and unresolved conflicts related to "feelings, wishes, magical fulfilments or frustrations of childbirth," resulting in pathological reactions in the susceptible.

J. P. Cattell¹⁶ described a syndrome persisting, in America, from Thanksgiving until after New Year's Day, characterized by diffuse anxiety, feelings of depression,

¹⁵Richard Sterba, "On Christmas," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, XIII:1 (1944), 79.

¹⁶J. P. Cattell, "The Holiday Syndrome," Psychoanalytic Review, XLII (1955), 39-43.

helplessness, nostalgia, irritability and wishes for magical resolution of problems, and reaching its zenith at Christmas. He illustrated his thesis that patients suffering from the holiday syndrome have difficulties in establishing close emotional ties, feel isolated, lonely and bored, and tend toward self-devaluation. They come from disrupted families and have poorly crystallized concepts of self and role.

S. Ferenczi¹⁷ contributed to our understanding of psychological reactions to holidays with his penetrating study of the "Sunday neurosis." He reminded his readers that many people suffered headaches and stomach disturbances with regular week-end periodicity, and illustrated the psychogenic nature of the symptoms. In explanation he stated that Sunday is a holiday from both internal and external taboos. One's internal restrictive forces are originally external prohibitions as one has interpreted them and at times when external limitations are loosened, the internal censors of some people become more lax. Certain neurotically predisposed individuals enter their holidays with excessive wantonness of act or fantasy. They become threatened by a potential unrestricted release of instinctual drives and untimely depressions or "little

¹⁷S. Ferenczi, Further Contributions to the Theory and Technique of Psychoanalysis (New York: Basic Books, 1952), p. 174.

hysterical symptoms" result.

B. Boyer¹⁸ contended that the depressions which occur during the Christmas season are primarily the result of re-awakened conflicts related to unresolved sibling rivalries. On the basis of a study of seventeen patients who suffered Christmas depressions, he suggests that partly because the holiday celebrates the birth of a Child so favored that competition with Him is futile, earlier memories, especially of oral frustration, are rekindled.

¹⁸B. Boyer, "Christmas 'Neurosis'," Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, III (1955), 467-488.

WORK SHEET A

PSYCHOSEXUAL STAGES	PSYCHOSOCIAL CRISES	RADIUS OF SIGNIFICANT RELATIONS	PSYCHOSOCIAL MODALITIES	BASIC VIRTUES
Oral Incorporative Mode	Trust vs. Mistrust	Maternal Person	To get To give in return	Hope
Anal-Urethral Retentive-Inclusive Mode	Autonomy vs. Doubt, Shame	Parental Persons	To hold (on) To let (go)	Will
Phallic Intrusive-Inclusive Mode	Initiative vs. Guilt	Basic Family	To make (going after) To make-like (playing)	Purpose
Latency	Industry vs. Inferiority	"Neighborhood" School	To make things (completing) together	Competence
Genitality Puberty On	Identity vs. Diffusion	Peer Groups and Outgroups, Models of Leadership	To be oneself (or not to be) To share oneself	Fidelity
	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Partners in friendship, Sex, Competition, Cooperation	To lose and find oneself in another	Love
	Generativity vs. Self-Absorption	Divided Labor and Shared Household	To make be To take care of	Care
	Integrity vs. Disgust, Despair	"Mankind", "My Kind"	To be, through having been. To face not being	Wisdom

PART I

AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL REVIEW OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTMAS

This inquiry into the experience and expression of persons during the holiday will attempt to show that in the depths of its meaning Christmas is a crisis experience of ultimate concern. It is a moment of confrontation with the immutable polarity of being and non-being, of life and death, and can be seen as a way of response to such confrontation. Darkness is symbolic of death, light of life, and Christmas occurs at the time of year when the winter's darkness is overcome by the re-birth of the sun (the re-birth of light). This death and re-birth of the sun at the winter solstice thus became an event of reassurance, celebrated in different and various festivals by the earth's peoples.

The American scholar and professor of anthropology, Dr. Earl Count, has described Christmas in these words:

(It is) a spontaneous drama of the common folk, a prayer, a hymn. All the while that Raphael was painting the Sistine Madonna, Frenchmen building the cathedral of Chartres, English bishops composing the Book of Common Prayer, Handel his Messiah, Bach his B-Minor Mass, the common people, out of whom these geniuses sprang, were composing Christmas.¹

They composed it slowly, taking centuries to complete the task. It evolved as an expression of religious

¹Earl W. Count, 4,000 Years of Christmas (New York: Schuman, 1948), p. 87.

devotion, secular pageantry, and pagan rite. The composition is that accomplished by the fusion of traditions in which man has attempted to understand himself and his universe, and the relationship thereof. Thus it is that few of the elements characterizing the festival of Christmas have their origin within the Church.

Because of these pagan associations Christmas became condemned as heathen, and even outlawed with penalty if celebrated. The Puritan influence remains today, but never could be successful in completely abolishing such expression of man's ultimate concern regardless of what labels are attached to such expression. Man remains a creature of nature though a Christian.

I. CRISIS AND ULTIMATE CONCERN

While in medicine a crisis once meant a turning point for better or worse, a crucial period in which a decisive turn one way or another is unavoidable, in pastoral and clinical work (as in economics and politics) this ancient little word "crisis" has increasingly emphasized only half of its meaning, the catastrophic half. Such crises occur in man's development and experience sometimes abruptly and with shock, sometimes more quietly as when new capacities yearn to match new opportunities, and when new aspirations make it more obvious how limited one is. Christmas is of this nature: capacities meet opportunities,

aspirations meet limitations, life meets death. Thinking of Christmas as a crisis, then, indicates that experientially it is a crucial period in which man confronts the ultimate question of his being, and the nature of being itself.

Man's concerns encompass every dimension of experience and thought, personally and interpersonally, consciously and unconsciously. Such concerns are intrinsic to the festival of Christmas, and the explicit nature of the Christmas crisis may be for the individual more unconscious than conscious, but still a part of the reality of the experience of Christmas. That which concerns man ultimately, however, is not limited to any specific dimension of being, for his ultimate concern is that which determines the very fact of being itself--also, the fact of non-being.

Nothing can be of ultimate concern for us which does not have the power of threatening and saving our being. The term "being" does not designate existence in time and space. Existence is continuously threatened and saved by things and events which have no ultimate concern for us. But the term "being" means the whole of human reality, the structure, the meaning, the aim of existence Man is ultimately concerned about his being and meaning. 'To be or not to be' in this sense is a matter of ultimate, unconditional, total and infinite concern. Man is infinitely concerned about the infinity to which he belongs, from which he is separated, and for which he is longing. Man is totally concerned about the totality which is his true being and which is disrupted in time and space.¹

Man is unconditionally concerned about that which

¹Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, 14.

conditions his being, and thus questions of ultimate concern are questions about life and death.

Christmas is an experience which confronts man with such concern for it confronts man with birth which at once confronts him with death. And confrontation with the polarity of being and non-being is, in every man's life, a critical happening. An examination of the establishment of Christmas shows that it is a response to such confrontation.

II. PAGAN FESTIVALS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTMAS

Man has always given expression to religious, psychological and social concerns through festivals. Many years ago the dates of festivals in all parts of the world were collected and a curve was constructed indicating the times of year in which they most often occurred.² The curve revealed the unmistakable fact that by far the greatest number of festivals was held at one or other of the four cardinal points in the earth's journey around the sun. The summer and winter solstice are the most favored times, towards the end of June and December respectively, when the sun begins to wane or wax, when the days begin to shorter or lengthen. The times of year next in favor are those of the spring or autumn equinox, towards the end of March or

²Ernest Jones, "The Significance of Christmas," in Essays in Applied Psychoanalysis (New York: International Universities Press, 1964), II, 213.

of September.

Apparently, man has always tended to associate his aspirations and emotions with these fundamental changes relating to the source of all life, the sun. The idea of the sun has permeated the religions of the world, for it is the most visible and striking emblem of both the life-giving and life-destroying forces of the universe.³

The innumerable religious festivals of the world can be further divided into two broad groups: cheerful and solemn ones. There are festivals of celebration, of rejoicing; there are occasions of sheer merriment and they have at times passed over into bacchanalian orgies. On the other hand there are festivals which mark man's periodic need to search his heart, to make a serious review of his position in the universe or to question his purpose in life and take strict account of himself. The former group has been described as being of the mood of easy conscience, the latter of uneasy conscience.⁴

The psychoanalyst, Ernest Jones, in his discussion of Christmas, places Christmas in the first group.⁵ If one considers, however, the Christmas season as a whole, perhaps including Thanksgiving and certainly including the celebration of the New Year, he will find the

³Cf. James G. Frazer, The New Golden Bough, ed. Theodore Gaster (New Jersey: S. G. Phillips, 1959).

⁴Jones, loc. cit.

⁵Ibid.

characteristics of the solemn as well as of the cheerful festivals.

Literally, of course, Christmas signifies the date of Christ's birthday. But actually we do not know what day of the year Jesus was born, and we do not know the exact year of his birth. All things considered, 6 B.C. is the most probable year, but there is not the slightest evidence in the gospels as to the particular day of birth.⁶ There must have been some other reason then for choosing a particular day on which to celebrate Christ's birth.

Some early Christians regarded the matter of Christ's physical birth as too mundane or even desecrating a thought to dwell on. In 245 A.D. Origen declared it to be a sin even to think of celebrating the birthday of Christ "as if he were a King Pharaoh."⁷ They confined their attention to the date when the Holy Spirit took possession of Him; that was His real Divine birth. This moment was regarded as the occasion of His baptism, and to commemorate it they chose the date of January 6, now called Epiphany. The reason for selection of January 6 can only be surmised. It was a date when many festivals were held in the Ancient World, probably on astronomical grounds, it being the first day on

⁶Elmer Mould, Essentials of Bible History (New York: Ronald Press, 1951), pp. 487-488.

⁷Herbert Wernecke, Christmas Customs Around the World (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), p. 13.

which the morning hours begin to lengthen. The date is not unconnected with a pagan water festival in Alexandria in relation to the winter solstice (hence the liturgical stress on the blessing of waters and baptism).⁸ Epiphany and Baptism were for many years closely associated. By the fourth century the date of January 6 was universally accepted in the Eastern World as the time to celebrate the birth of Christ, whether the human or the divine one, and, in the oldest Christian nation, (the Armenian), that is still the date adhered to as being Christmas.⁹

The theological controversies on the nature of Christ decided, however, that his divinity began at birth, so that attention was directed there. There developed in the West a distinctive nativity festival on December 25, early in the fourth century.

Until 350 A.D., when Pope Julius I proclaimed December 25 as the date of the Nativity, almost every month in the year had, at one time or another, been named by reputable scholars as the likely date of Christ's birth.¹⁰ Finally, in 400 A.D. an Imperial rescript ordered all theatres to be closed on Christmas Day (as well as at

⁸Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), p. 154.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Stanley Fillmore, The Pageantry of Christmas (New York: Time, 1963), p. 10.

Epiphany and Easter),¹¹ indicating official recognition of December 25 as being the time to celebrate the birth of the Christ child.

The two celebrations of Epiphany and Christmas arose independently of each other in the early fourth century, the one in the East and the other in the West. Only slowly was December 25 adopted in the East where January 6 was observed in honor of both the physical and spiritual birth, but in the course of the fifth century the 25th of December was firmly established in both East and West as the proper time to celebrate the anniversary of Christ.

The reasons why the festival was established at all, and why that particular date was selected for the purpose, are both interesting and complex. There are two main reasons generally accepted in explanation of the decision favoring December 25. The first is that the date was partly determined by what is called the "Plan of the Ages." By complicated and fantastic calculations the birth (creation) of the world was determined to have occurred on the vernal equinox, March 25.¹² Correspondingly its new birth in the Savior, in Christ as the New Creation, would have been at the same moment. It was considered then that Christ was conceived on March 25 and his birth, therefore,

¹¹Jones, op. cit., pp. 214-215.

¹²Vergilius Ferm, (ed.), An Encyclopedia of Religion (New York: Philosophical Library, 1945), p. 164.

would be December 25.¹³

Perhaps even more, however, the date was influenced by the fact that December 25 was a great pagan festival, that of Sol Invictus, which celebrated the victory of light over darkness and the lengthening of the sun's rays at the winter solstice.¹⁴ There had long been the Spring festivals joyously celebrating the rebirth of nature and there was the Saturnalia (December 17-24) and Brumalia (December 25) rejoicing in the end of the winter solstice and the "birthday of the unconquered Sun."¹⁵ As the Day of the Sun became the Lord's Day (Sunday) so, other pagan days and festive occasions were assimilated by the Church and became Christian holy days. St. Cyprian, a third century Bishop of Carthage, is quoted as having said: "How wonderfully acted Divine Providence that on the day that the Sun was born--Christ should be born," referring to December 25.¹⁶ But it would be another century before the Church as a whole adopted his point of view.

Sir James Frazer quotes a Syrian writer of the late fourth century, a Christian, who spoke about the motives for the selection of December 25 with great frankness.

The reason why the fathers transferred the celebration of the sixth of January to the twenty-fifth

¹³Walker, op. cit., p. 155. ¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ferm, op. cit., p. 165.

¹⁶Fillmore, op. cit., p. 10.

of December was this. It was a custom of the heathen to celebrate on the same twenty-fifth of December the birthday of the Sun, at which they kindled lights in token of festivity. In these solemnities and festivities the Christians also took part. Accordingly when the doctors of the Church perceived that the Christians had a leaning to this festival, they took counsel and resolved that the true Nativity should be solemnised on that day and the festival of the Epiphany on the sixth of January. Accordingly, along with this custom, the practice has prevailed of kindling fires till the sixth.¹⁷

It appears then that the Christian Church chose to celebrate the birthday of Jesus on the 25th of December in order to transfer the heathens' devotion to the Sun to him who was called the "Sun of Righteousness."¹⁸ To this day the association is recognized and expressed in song. The third stanza of "Hark! The Herald Angles Sing" reads:

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun
of Righteousness! Light and life to all He brings . . .

The description, "Sun of Righteousness", pertaining to the Christ has a scriptural reference found in the Old Testament book of Malachi (iv:2):

But unto you who fear my name shall the Sun of
righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and
ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.
(King James Version)

The phrase "Sun of Righteousness" is, however, derived from the symbolism of Egyptian religion in which the winged disk of the sun is often represented as a source of protection

¹⁷Frazer, op. cit., p. 359.

¹⁸Walker, op. cit., p. 155.

and blessing.¹⁹ The scriptures refer to the joy which will drive out all present gloom, and is compared to the healthy exuberance of a calf when released from the confinement of its stall.²⁰

It seems apparent, then, that the selection of December 25 as the time for celebration of Christ's birth was for political reasons. This had, of course, to be denied by the Church, and as Frazer points out, both St. Augustine and Pope Leo the Great found it necessary to rebuke Christians for still associating Christmas with the rebirth of the Sun instead of celebrating it on account of "him who made the sun."²¹ The pagan elements were also denounced by Gregory of Nazianzus, who died in 389 A.D. Gregory gives us an indication of what was considered pagan when he makes the request that Christmas be celebrated "after a heavenly and not an earthly manner," warning against excessive indulgence of feasting, drinking, and dressing in grotesque

¹⁹J. H. Breasted, The Dawn of Conscience (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), Fig. 3. Breasted also comments that "among the qualities or characteristics of the Sun-god which we can clearly discern after 3000 B.C. are the two called "Command" and "Understanding." The two were often personified as deities . . . As successor of the Sun-god, the Pharoah was often hailed by his courtiers, thus: 'It is Command who is in thy mouth, it is Understanding who is in thy heart.'" (p. 40)

²⁰Robert C. Dentan, "The Book of Malachi, in The Interpreters Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), VI, 1142.

²¹Frazer, op. cit., p. 359.

costumes of animal skins.²²

The fact remains that the date had already been established in innumerable pagan religions in just this sense: the 25th of December was the birthday of many a Persian, Phoenician, Egyptian, and Teutonic Sun-God. The decision choosing the 25th of December was in line with the general syncretizing activities of the Church in the early centuries when it was combating paganism. Gregory the Great (597 A.D.) wrote that the early missionaries should not try to put down pagan customs "upon the sudden", but adapt them "to the praise of God."²³

It seems to be more than coincidence, for example, that the date of Easter coincides with the similar celebration of the death and resurrection of Attis, officially celebrated at Rome on the 24th and 25th of March, the latter being regarded as the spring equinox, and therefore a most appropriate day for the revival of a god of vegetables who had been dead or asleep throughout the winter. It was considered that Christ suffered on the 25th of March, and accordingly some Christians regularly celebrated the Crucifixion on that day. But the already established tradition of such celebration on the 25th of March was ancient and deeply rooted. "The inference appears to be inevitable

²²Wernecke, op. cit., p. 13.

²³Fillmore, op. cit., p. 10.

that the passion of Christ must have been arbitrarily referred to that date in order to harmonize with an older festival of the spring equinox."²⁴

It seems equally apparent that the festival of the Assumption of the Virgin (at her death the Virgin Mary was assumed into heaven by her Son) in August has replaced the festival of the goddess Diana (Goddess of Childbirth, fertility);²⁵ that the festival of St. John the Baptist in June has succeeded to the water festivals of Adonis in midsummer;²⁶ that the feast of All Souls in November (the commemoration of "holy souls" who have departed this life, and are in the intermediate state awaiting their final end) continues the Celtic Feast of the Dead at that time.²⁷

The matter was, however, a good deal more complex than the Syrian writer supposed, and can only be understood fully by considering the life-and-death struggle that Christianity was going through in the first three or four centuries in Rome. The fourth century itself was a period of great change. In 303 A.D., for example, Emperor Diocletian, a rude but firm supporter of heathenism, celebrated the Nativity by putting 20,000 Roman Christians to death by fire. Just ten years later Emperor Constantine,

²⁴Frazer, op. cit., p. 360. ²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Sir James G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, Abridged ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1922), p. 296.

²⁷Frazer, The New Golden Bough, p. 630.

himself a Christian convert, issued his Edict of Toleration, which legalized Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. And in 392 A.D. Theodosius I was to outlaw paganism.²⁸

Christianity had to compete with a number of Oriental religions to secure the position it eventually attained. The general characteristic of them was the theme of a young Savior-God who dies, either periodically or once for all, and thereby assured the eternal salvation (from the wrath of the Almighty) of those who believe in him. The series included Attis, Osiris, Adonis, Mithra, and Jesus himself. Mithra and Jesus were ahead in the struggle for general acceptance, the only two religions, interestingly, in which the young God died only once and afterwards reigned in heaven. There is little doubt that Mithraism, the religion especially of the army, was the most dangerous rival to Christianity, and the issue of the conflict between the two faiths appears for a time to have hung in the balance.

There was a number of similarities in their beliefs, rituals and moral aspirations: virginity, baptism, holy communion, purity. Ernest Jones points out, however, that Mithraism had one serious weakness, on which the Christians seized and thereby ensured their ultimate success.

Its attitude and beliefs were exclusively masculine. In its ritual the young God took up the challenge of the wrathful, slew him and reigned in his stead, whereas in Christianity he submits in a more feminine

²⁸ Fillmore, op. cit., p. 10.

fashion to the will of the Father and by sacrificing himself assuages His wrath. Consistently with this solution Mithraism made the conflict one entirely between two males; there was no feminine element, no goddess, in its theology, and women were excluded from its worship. Christianity here saw its chance and incorporated from the other religions the element that had been missing in both itself and Mithraism. Isis, Cybele, Rhea, Astarte, and the rest began a new lease on life. Mary, who had been little but the necessary vehicle for the begetting of a son, was rapidly raised in status and from being the Mother of God was given in the fourth century the exalted title of Queen of Heaven.²⁹

Increasing attention was paid, not only to Mary's intercessory and saving powers, but especially to her maternal role. Mother and Infant (resembling Isis and Horus),³⁰ began to play a more central part in Christianity. Roman Catholicism is aware of the suggestion that devotion to Mary had its source in early pagan myth and rite, but answers the association by pointing out that it is quite obvious that true Marian cult always differed both in nature and in its effects from any pagan rite. "Pagan worship attributed divinity to its goddesses, and strangely enough at the same time, often turpitude. In the Christian tradition any such leanings or corruption were quickly condemned by the teaching Church."³¹ Yet there is some recognition of succession of thought: "In the conversion

²⁹Jones, op. cit., p. 217.

³⁰Frazer, The New Golden Bough, p. 323.

³¹Juniper B. Carol, (ed.), Mariology (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1961), III, p. 8.

of the pagans, the veneration of Mary may have succeeded an earlier idolatry, but as a vastly superior, appealing, and more dignified pattern of honor and respect, it could have found nothing to draw from pagan rites."³² (Underline supplied.)

As the maternal role of Mary became more important, so too did the circumstances of the birth of Jesus, including its date and the appropriate festival. Jones suggests a provocative thought when he says, "One might even wonder whether Christianity would have survived had it not instituted the festival of Christmas with all that it signified!"³³

In the crisis, the Roman Christians would not have been long in doubt about choosing the actual date--it was dictated by the situation. In the struggle between the Mithraic religion and Christianity it appears that the Church borrowed the festival of Christmas directly from its heathen rival. In the Julian calendar the 25th of December was reckoned as the winter solstice and hence was regarded as the Nativity of the Sun because the day begins to lengthen and the power of the sun to increase from that turning point of the year. In the Eastern countries of Syria and Egypt the ritual of the nativity was remarkable.

The celebrants retired into certain inner shrines from which at midnight they issued with a loud cry,

³²Ibid.

³³Jones, op. cit., p. 217.

'The Virgin has brought forth! The light is waxing!' The Egyptians even represented the new-born sun by the image of an infant which on his birthday, the winter solstice, they brought forth and exhibited to his worshippers.³⁴

The Virgin who thus bore a son on that day was, apparently, the great Oriental Mother-Goddess, whom the Semites called the Heavenly Virgin. Mithra, after conquering the sun had become a Sun-God himself with the title of Solus Invictus. They called him the Unconquered Sun, and his festival, the Mithrakana, was appropriately celebrated on December 25. Rejoicing at the end of the winter solstice, the Romans celebrated this "Birthday of the Unconquered Sun" in the madness of the Saturnalia by the lifting of almost all restraints, the closing of schools, restrictions of punishment, freedom of slaves, merry-making, gaming and feasting. Normal life turned upside down. Gambling was declared legal, courts were closed, and no one could be convicted of a crime. Slaves dressed in their master's clothes and were served by their masters. A mock king was chosen to rule the festivities: he would turn up at Christmas again, centuries later, as the Lord of Misrule. Lavish holiday banquets featured such delicacies as peacock eggs in pepper sauce. The exchange of gifts became an important part of the festivities. They were simple at first--wax candles or clay dolls--but they slowly grew

³⁴Frazer, The Golden Bough, p. 358.

more elaborate.³⁵ If, therefore, the Christians had to compete with such formidable rivals they had to assert that it was their God who had been born on that significant date, and surely of a Heavenly Virgin.

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUN

In man's attempt to fathom the secret of the universe and to adjust his little life to its awful mysteries, the sun has played an important role. There are some indications that man's appreciation of the sun has been one of anxiety, since it was evident that without its heat and light life could not go on. Consider, for example, the anxiety displayed during an eclipse and the human efforts (tom-toms, dancing) made to assist the sun in its fight with "a savage beast with which they supposed him to be struggling."³⁶

In contrast, however, Ernest Jones is persuaded that the case was really otherwise, and that the sun was much more a source of security. He reminds us that, in the East in particular, celestial phenomena were observed with astonishing accuracy, and that the motions of the stars and planets were known in great detail: astronomy was, in fact, the first of the sciences. Those people knew perfectly well that the sun would wax after December 25, just

³⁵Fillmore, op. cit., p. 10.

³⁶Frazer, The New Golden Bough, p. 48.

as surely as he would wane before then and that day would infallibly follow night. Uncertain human happenings could therefore be referred to his activities as a means of obtaining reassurance. We still say, as an expression of the utmost certainty, "It is as sure as that the sun will rise tomorrow," and during a particular Christmas season people begin speaking with the same kind of certainty about next Christmas. The sun belonged to the external absolutes of the universe, like God, and human uncertainties that could be brought into association with it, or better still, identification, would to that extent be dispelled.

Comparative anthropology has shown that man has always tended to identify the changes in the sun's apparent powers with the most vital of his own activities. The growing young sun of spring brings times for confident rejoicing which culminate in the mad triumph of Midsummer Eve, the German Johannisnacht (June 23), when the bonfires shoot up to proclaim the facts of human and divine strength and power.³⁷

On the other hand, the diminishing strength of the sun arouses by association the deep fears man always nurses of his own failing powers, of impotence, old age, and

³⁷The social and political mood which led the fathers of the American revolution to declare independence from England in the beginning of July (1776) provided a whole nation with the opportunity of perpetuating man's delight in the crackling of fires at that time of the year.

death--with all the terrors of what may follow this.

The re-birth of the sun, therefore, has often been the greatest reassurance he can receive of eternal hope, "always provided--and that was vital--that he is identified with the Deity."³⁸ It is the central theme of many religions that a God, however powerful, should periodically, (most often annually), die, to be constantly re-born. It is fitting that this re-birth should take place on what the pagan Anglo-Saxons called "Mother-Night", i.e., Christmas Eve, the date from which their new year commenced. The Sun and the God may die, but they will surely be eternally re-born, so all is well.

The most natural expression of the re-birth idea is the association with a new-born babe, and to Christians it is the birth of the babe Jesus that is central in all that Christmas stands for. There is no moment of the year in which the Madonna and Babe are more adored--especially in the Roman Catholic Church; they then occupy the center of interest to the exclusion of all other theological preoccupations. In many Catholic countries Christmas is little else; the more mundane accompaniments and ceremonies of Northern Christmases are postponed to another date. In Italy, for example, gifts are not exchanged until the day

³⁸Jones, op. cit., p. 219.

of Epiphany (January 6).³⁹

It was discussed above that the religions competing for general acceptance had the common belief in a Savior-God who dies and thereby assures salvation to those who believe in him. It is probable that this concept of a sacrificial God was preceded by the custom of sacrificing a king from time to time, either when he grew old or even, as Frazer discusses in his Golden Bough, annually.⁴⁰ Apparently, many such a king acquiesced in the proceeding, sharing the belief of his people that it would benefit the good of the community. It was inevitable, however, that an alternative procedure should be sought for. Two were found. One was to displace his majesty to the skies in the form of a god like the Syrian god Adonis (who represents the dying and awakening vitality in vegetation; male counterpart to Aphrodite), or an actual Sun-God (e.g., the Egyptian Ra). That the Sun should decline almost to death every year and then arise refreshed in his glory and strength was a solution satisfying to all concerned and was a relatively innocent form of regicide (i.e., parricide). The other solution was to provide a substitute, a mock king. In Babylonia, for example, the king originally had to die at the end of his year's rule, ostensibly so as to go and

³⁹Wernecke, op. cit., pp. 54, 51.

⁴⁰Frazer, The New Golden Bough, pp. 223ff; pp. 434ff.

help the God Marduk in his periodic struggle with the monsters of chaos in the regions below, but after a time a criminal was set up for a few days as a "mock king" and then executed in the king's stead.⁴¹ The periodic rebellion against authority (ultimately, the Father) implied in the ceremony is seen also in the general license of the rejoicings and by the curious reversals so characteristic of the Roman Saturnalia, and before that the Persian Sacae and the Babylonian Zagmuk festivals.⁴² Even in the early centuries of our era the Roman soldiers stationed in the Balkans had the custom of choosing by lot one of their number to preside over the saturnalia as king of the revels. After he was feted and boisteriously paid court to he had to complete his career by standing at the altar and killing himself. St. Dasius (303 A.D.) is said to have achieved his fame, and martyrdom, by refusing to play this part on the ground of its being a pagan custom.⁴³

In parts of central Europe a troupe of masqueraders are still headed by a "fool" or "wild man" who leads their singing but with less lethal results than formerly. In the Middle Ages the "Feast of Fools" was similarly presided over by someone who was given the various titles of

⁴¹Jones, op. cit., p. 221.

⁴²Frazer, The New Golden Bough, p. 235.

⁴³Ibid., pp. 560-561.

"Bishop of Fools", "Lord of Misrule", "Abbot of Unreason", and who reigned from All Hallows' Eve until Christmas. His position was abrogated in Scotland by Act of Parliament in 1555.⁴⁴ The festivity included a mock service held in the Church, with an imitation Mass. Robes were worn inside out and music sheets held upside down--a general reversal somewhat reminiscent of the Satanic Black Mass.⁴⁵ This burlesque of the ritual, often done by the lower clergy, is indicative of violent reaction against divine authority. The only obvious trace left of such reaction against authority during Christmas is the license of kissing anyone encountered under hanging mistletoe.⁴⁶ The mistletoe itself has pagan origin: In ancient Britain it was the sacred plant of the Druids, the archdruid and his priests paying tribute to the victory of the evergreen over winter's darkness by performing elaborate ceremonies around it at the winter solstice.⁴⁷

Perhaps the last emblem of the sacrificed god or king was the ceremony of the boar's head at the Christmas banquet, turning it into a totemistic feast. The boar,

⁴⁵R. E. L. Masters, Eros and Evil (New York: Matrix House, 1966), pp. 98-99. At the Black Mass, which reached its full flowering in the 18th and 19th centuries, obscene representations of the saints, of the Virgin, and of the Son of Man were employed for sexual acts of all sorts.

⁴⁶For a complete discussion of the significance and use of mistletoe see Frazer, The New Golden Bough, p. 60ff.

⁴⁷Wernecke, op. cit., p. 19.

sacred to the god Frey (the Scandanavian god of fertility) in the north and to others in the east,⁴⁸ is one of the patriarchal symbols in the unconscious.⁴⁹ In his parri-
 cidal ritual Mithra sometimes slew a bull, sometimes a
 boar. The boar was treated as a royal personage, his entry
 to the banqueting hall being preceded by a flourish of
 trumpets and similar rituals. In the Balkans and in Scan-
 dinavia cakes or loaves in the form of a pig are still sold
 at Christmas, reminding the anthropologist how long the
 impulse to cannibalistic parricide persists in the folklore
 of the people.

Many other elements of the Christmas festival were
 added as Christianity advanced northward incorporating pre-
 existing customs and rituals many of which had to do with
 the sun. The pagan adherents of the gods Woden and Thor
 were found in the North to be battling the winter's evil
 darkness with immense bonfires. When the Celts and Teutons
 commemorated the return of the sun, fire naturally played
 a significant part. For the building of these fires,
 kindling the yule log became a ceremony of considerable
 detail and significance. The Druids, for example, care-
 fully selected a large log, preferably from a fruit-bearing
 tree, like the apple, and at other times from a long-lasting

⁴⁸Frazer, The New Golden Bough, pp. 94, 446.

⁴⁹Jones, op. cit., p. 222.

one, like the oak. At a solemn gathering they blessed and prayed over it, that it might last forever. Generally, a piece of the old log was kept to start the fire the next year.⁵⁰

Holly and evergreens give evidence to the fact that there is still life in nature, and because it bore fruit in the winter it came to be a symbol of immortality.⁵¹ The Christmas tree itself, was added only in the seventeenth century, has its roots in the ancient tradition of tree worship.⁵² Primitive tribes revered trees and adorned them in their homes to bring the world of nature indoors. The Egyptians brought the green date palms indoors, for they signified to them life triumphant over death. The Romans trimmed trees with trinkets and toys during the Saturnalia. The Druids honored Woden by tying gilded apples and other offerings on tree branches. When these people accepted Christianity, they continued these winter rites but gradually changed them to honor Christ. So the evergreen tree came to signify Christ bringing new life to the world after the longest dark days of winter.⁵³ Each of these symbols symbolizes light in darkness, life in the midst of death. All life will surely be somehow

⁵⁰Wernecke, op. cit., p. 29. ⁵¹Ibid., p. 18.

⁵²Frazer, The New Golden Bough, pp. 72ff.

⁵³Wernecke, op. cit., p. 21.

renewed and one need not fear extinction.

One of the most obvious ceremonies celebrating the coming of light into darkness is the use of Christmas candles which replaced the old Feast of Lights. Light has long meant faith and intelligence, and it is used as a symbol of Christian joy which dispels the darkness of paganism and death. Torches, watch fires, beacon lights, and lamps often accompanied joyous occasions and festivities. The Romans, during their Saturnalia, fastened candles to trees, indicating the sun's return to the earth. The Jews have celebrated an eight-day Feast of Lights (Hanukkah) since pre-Christian times commemorating their victory for religious freedom.

The Christian use of candles symbolizing Christ as the Light of the World seems to be, then, a combination of Roman and Hebrew customs. As early as 492, Pope Gelasius established Candlemas Day as the time for blessing candles in the churches in commemoration of the presentation of Christ in the temple (Luke 2:22) by his parents, when Simeon greeted him as "a light to lighten the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32).⁵⁴ This day is the time of blessing of candles for the year including a procession with candles.

In medieval Europe the custom arose of lighting a giant Christmas candle that would serve to shed its glow

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 24.

on the festivities until Twelfth-night.⁵⁵ Martin Luther is credited with placing tapers on the tree, and since his day, not only has the candle come to be used ever more widely in the homes, but candlelight carol and Communion services have gained favor. While electric lights have replaced candles on trees especially, in 1950 Americans spent \$13,000,000 for more than 15,000,000 candles for church and home use.⁵⁶

Some of the other symbolic elements of the Christmas holiday such as Santa Claus, the Baby, and Christmas Cards will be discussed in the following chapter.

The Light which dispels the darkness is thus a consistent symbol and predominant focal point in the festivals out of which Christmas took its shape and in Christmas itself.

IV. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH AND AMERICAN CHRISTMAS

Historically expressed, the festival of Christmas is thus a fusion of many strains of pagan customs and beliefs, and the feeling that Christmas in some deep sense is a pagan festival has evidenced itself with a persistence throughout the ages. The Western Church was responsible for its incorporation into the Christian religion,

⁵⁵Frazer, The New Golden Bough, p. 635.

⁵⁶Wernecke, op. cit., p. 25.

while the Eastern Church long protested against what they regarded to be a pagan innovation. It is true that few of the customs connected with the celebration of Christmas are actually church festivals--that is, have been consecrated by the church or come within the church year. Ancient practices and festivals growing out of man's reaction to the seasons, the strange and striking moods and changes of nature, were continued by the Christians with new significance attached. Man remains a creature of nature though a Christian.

The Puritans felt very strongly on the matter of the pagan elements and associations of the celebration of Christmas, and an Act of Parliament in 1644 forbade such celebration as being a heathen festival.

It is said that Christmas was first observed as a holiday in England in 521 when King Arthur celebrated his victory in retaking York. The guests at his famous Round Table were entertained by wandering minstrels who glorified the national heroes. Legend holds that King Arthur and his court spent their Christmases in boisterous feasting and drinking.⁵⁷ In the 9th century Alfred the Great

⁵⁷Fillmore, op. cit., p. 26. One such celebration is disapprovingly described in this account from an English chronicle of 1736. "At this time (A.D. 521) that great Monarch Arthur, with his Clergy, and his Nobility, and Soldiers, kept Christmas in York, whither resorted to him the prime Persons of the Neighbourhood, and spent the latter End of December in Mirth, Jollity, Drinking, and Vices that are too often the Consequence of them; so that

annually set aside 12 days of yule festival. In the Norman period, after 1066, Christmas became gayer than ever, entertaining and reveling continuing until the Twelfth night (January 6).

In 1509 the lusty and proud Henry VIII ascended the throne of England. The epitome of the Renaissance king, he was alert to the promises of exploration and had a vast appetite for life. His court functions and Christmas celebrations had an assured majesty that outshone his predecessors'. Of Henry's Twelfth Night festival in 1512, a court historian wrote: "At night, the King with XI others, wer disguised after the maner of Italie, called a maske, a thing not seen afore in England." After the Banquet, "maskers came in with six gentlemen disguised in silke, bearing staff torches, and desired the ladies to daunce." Thus the masked ball became a glittering addition to Christmas.⁵⁸

the Representations of the old Heathenish Feasts dedicated to Saturn were here revived; but the Number of days they lasted were doubled and amongst the wealthier Sort trebled; during which Time they counted it almost a Sin to treat of any serious Matter. Gifts are sent mutually from and to one another; frequent invitations pass betwixt friends, and domestick Offenders are not punished. Our countrymen call this Jule-tide, substituting the name of Julius Caesar for that of Saturn. The Vulgar are yet persuaded that the Nativity of Christ is then celebrated, but mistakenly; for 'tis plain they imitate the Lasciviousness of Bacchanalians, rather than the memory of Christ, then, as they say, born.

⁵⁸Fillmore, op. cit., p. 29.

In their city homes or country manors, noblemen and gentry created their own magnificance. Many of them kept "a maker of Interludes" to compose the yearly entertainments. Most of them employed as director of their festivities a Master of Revels or--continuing the older and wilder tradition--a Lord of Misrule. The clergy still had their revels too--the upside-down days when a Boy Bishop ruled. Paul M. Kendall, in The Yorkist Age described a typical celebration:

St. Nicholas' Day (Dec. 6) marked the opening of Christmas revelries. In the morning the Mayor and his fellows heard Mass and listened to a sermon by the Boy-Bishop; then after dinner, they played solemnly at dice (a traditional part of the festival) until the Boy-Bishop arrived with a train of clerical attendants to give the town officers his blessing and be refreshed with bread and wine. . . . He was a busy man during this season dominated by the Lord of Misrule. The people of Bristol, like those of other towns, celebrated with mumming and gaming and dancing and brawls among visored rascals in dark streets. The Mayor heard sermons . . . and on Christmas Eve he issued the usual proclamation against wearing of masks, carrying weapons, and remaining in the streets without lights after curfew.⁵⁹

In October, 1517, Luther nailed his 95 theses to the doors of Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany; the Reformation was formally begun and was in full momentum by the time John Calvin wrote The Institutes of The Christian Religion in 1534. Luther, though a reformer, was no puritan. He enjoyed the festival of Christmas, adding to it hymns of

⁵⁹Paul M. Kendall, The Yorkist Age (New York: Norton, 1962), pp. 69-70.

his own and, according to legend more generous than accurate the Christmas tree. It was, however, among the Lutherans that the tree first became a Christmas tradition. The Reformation did not immediately alter Christmas, but the sophistication of the Renaissance made considerable changes.

In 1531, Henry VIII had assumed control of the Church in England; in 1541 he banned the Boy Bishops, and a few decades later, the Lords of Misrule began to fade. The old, pious Nativity plays, which seemed coarse and superstitious to the worldly Renaissance man, were steadily dwindling. By the end of the century they were seldom performed in England, and a new drama, complex and humanistic, was in full flower.

At the court on Christmas of 1594, the new drama brought together its leading patron and playwright--Queen Elizabeth and William Shakespeare, whose plays remained a popular court attraction after James I succeeded her. During James' second Christmas season as king in 1604-1605, seven of Shakespeare's plays and two of Ben Jonson's were performed.

In the 1560's the Puritans arose in England. They were so-called because of their excessive scrupulousness, and were, accordingly shocked by such extravagance, and also by Christmas itself, which seemed to them dangerously pagan. One Puritan angrily noted that "In Christmas tyme there is nothing else used but cardes, dice, tables,

maskyng, mumming, bowling, and suche like fooleries."⁶⁰

In 1642 the Puritans came to power in England, and under Oliver Cromwell the streets of London resounded to the town criers' shouts of "No Christmas! No Christmas!" Playhouses were shut; the day of feasting was turned into a fast. When Londoners decked their streets with greenery, the Lord Mayor had the boughs burned. Citizens were expected to report to work as usual, and Parliament declared that on the day "commonly called Christmas, no observance shall be had, not any solemnity used or exercised in churches in respect thereof."⁶¹ Christmas was not only festival to suffer from the rigors of the Puritan conscience. Although Cromwell did not favor it, his more extreme Puritan colleagues foisted on a pleasure-loving people a series of hateful prohibitions which closed the theaters, muzzled the press, stamped out many wholesome as well as unwholesome amusements, and forbid other religious festivals including Easter and Whitsuntide (Pentecost).⁶² Such edict were impossible to enforce completely, but this puritanic spirit can still be detected in religious groups today, both in Europe and America.

To this day, for example, many Protestant sects,

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²T. Walter Wallbank and Alastair Taylor, Civilization Past and Present (New York: Scott, Foresman, 1954), I, p. 566.

notably in Scotland, look distinctly askance at Christmas as being something alien to the pure faith. Ever since the Reformation there has been a suspicious attitude connected with Christmas with what has been called the "paganism" of the Roman Catholic Church.⁶³

With the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II (1660), "Merrie England" became herself again, although the holiday retained its solemn tone in New England. The old yuletide customs gradually reappeared but never again became as extravagant. In the Victorian period Charles Dickens, a spokesman for humanitarian reform, wrote A Christmas Carol (1843), which both reflected the customs of the time and did much to establish them more firmly. Finally, in 1871, the Bank Holiday Act made Christmas an official day of rest in England. It was 19 years later that America's last laggard, the territory of Oklahoma, followed suit.⁶⁴

With the settlement of America by both Puritan and Cavalier types, two distinct emphases prevailed here for a time. The pleasure-loving Cavaliers brought to the

⁶³Jones, op. cit., p. 224. An amusing example is reported by Jones: A fanatical member of parliament moved that, in order to eliminate any association with the Mass, the word itself be purified by being changed to Christ-tide: by way of answer, however, he was exhorted to initiate the change by altering his own name from Thomas Massey Massey to Thotide Tidey Tidey!

⁶⁴Fillmore, op. cit., p. 74.

Jamestown, Virginia, colony, 1607, such holiday customs as the ringing of bells, burning a yule log, dining elaborately dancing, playing games, and singing carols. Evergreens decorated their homes and churches, and candles were used freely.⁶⁵

A similar spirit pervaded the jolly Dutch settlement in New Amsterdam, later New York. They loved yuletide feasting and merriment, and to their St. Niclaes, San Class, or Sant Nikolass, we owe our modern Santa Claus.

The Pilgrims, however, did not have such gay festivities. William Bradford reported in his diary in 1620 that on "ye 25th day begane to erect ye first house for comone use to receive them and their goods."⁶⁶ The holiday was still shunned in favor of hard work. The next year Governor Bradford again forbade the observance of the day and commanded that work be continued as on any other day. His journal apparently reflects the atmosphere that prevailed for some time:

On ye day called Christmas-day, ye Gov'r caled them out to worke (as was used) but ye most of this new company excused themselves, and said it went against their consciences to work on ye day. So ye Gov'r tould them that if they made it a mater of conscience, he would spare them till they were better informed. So he led away ye rest, and left them: but when they came home at noone from their works, he found them in ye streets at play, openly; some pitching ye barr, and some at stoole ball, and such like sports. So he went to them and took away their implements, and told them it was against his conscience that they should play,

⁶⁵Wernecke, op. cit., p. 15. ⁶⁶Ibid.

and others worke. If they made ye keeping of it matter of devotion, let them kepe their houses, but there should be no gameing or revelling in ye streets. Since which time nothing hath been attempted that way, at least, openly.⁶⁷

Some of the pilgrims had a less somber outlook, as indicated by their festive celebrations with friendly neighbors, but enmity toward such holiday joys is expressed clearly in a law passed in 1659.

Whosoever shall be found observing any such day as Christmas and the like, either by forbearing of labor, feasting, or any other way upon such account as afore-said, ever such person so offending shall pay for each offense five shilling as a fine to the country.⁶⁸

The influence of the more moderate attitude of those belonging to the Church of England gradually led to the repeal of that law in 1681. A Christmas service was conducted five years later in the Boston Town Hall, but it was not until 1856 that the holiday was legally recognized, and New England actually did not enter enthusiastically into Christmas observances until the second half of the nineteenth century.⁶⁹

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 16.

⁶⁹For a complete discussion of Christmas customs in America see James H. Barnette, The American Christmas (New York: Macmillan, 1954); Wernecke, op. cit. For a complete discussion of Christmas customs in Europe and other countries of the world see Wernecke.

PART II

DEVELOPMENTAL CRISES AND THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRISTMAS

The significance of Christmas ultimately lies in the meaning it has and holds for persons. To discern such meaning, however, one must go beyond the historic traditions and customs, the religious devotions and theologies. These are, to be sure, important dimensions of Christmas, but perhaps more symbolic of the concerns of man which ultimately produced the festival. In the end, the significance of Christmas is personal, and deeper than conscious thought and behavior disclose. It will be shown in this part of the dissertation that the Christmas experience includes expression of some of the needs, desires and fears which exist deep within the psyche. To understand Christmas, then, one must attempt to understand the unconscious factors determining the form and content of the festival and the nature of the Christmas experience itself. It is a complex festival in that every phase of human development, from birth to death, is given symbolic expression, and the Christmas experience of any particular individual will be in accord with the nature of his own psychosexual and psychosocial developmental history.

In this Part, a consideration is taken of the first three stages in the Life Cycle with regard to psychosexual and psychosocial dynamics, including discussion of the

basic virtues which emerge and become established during these stages. It will be shown that in the experience and celebration of Christmas each one of these stages is represented. Each stage is a time of crisis, and it will be shown that Christmas itself is a time of crisis, the intensity of which is directly related to and dependent upon the individual's developmental history. Christmas confronts man not only with the ultimate polarity of life and death, but the polarities of love and hate, sexuality and aggression, and individualization and participation.

This Part begins by discussing one of the fundamental elements of both Christmas and human life--the experience of birth. The birth of the individual, and the birth of siblings both are relevant to the significance of Christmas.

CHAPTER I

BIRTH, ANXIETY, AND THE FEAR OF DEATH

I. THE SHOCK OF BIRTH

Our first experience in extrauterine living is birth itself. Birth is an experience of short duration but it is the first and one of the most profound shocks the human being receives. Experiments have proved that for at least two months previous to birth the fetus has been able to receive sensory impressions, to react to them, and to become sensitized to them, so that when the stimulus is re-applied, months after birth has taken place, the reaction is more vigorous than if the previous experience had not occurred.¹ So the child at birth is capable of receiving impressions, of reacting to them, and of storing up memories of the impressions and the reactions in his nervous system. Birth is definitely a shock to the young organism and requires some quick physiological and psychological readjustments--the use of the lungs; a change in circulation of the blood; the taking of food in a new way; the adjustment to changes in the external temperature, to those in the moisture of the skin, to those brought about by relative freedom of movement, the handling and movement

¹O. Spurgeon English and Gerald Pearson, Emotional Problems of Living (New York: Norton, 1955), p. 16.

of the body, and the impact of sound and light. All these new factors in the environment of the newborn child bring about tension within him. It is not knowing just how vivid or how conscious these impressions are but as experiences they are registered, along with many others that follow, to make up a person's impression of life. The young organism's reactions to these experiences become part of his habitual methods of reacting throughout the rest of his life. Birth imposes lasting emotional experiences; for although the mind of the infant is undeveloped, the painful birth experiences are registered on his brain; they do not pass into thin air.

Although it cannot be proven, it seems likely that the startling shock of the experiences of birth and the newborn's psychological reactions to them may lay down the pattern for the complex combination of physiological and psychological reactions that we feel in any situation that seems to be dangerous--the reaction patterns which we call states of fear and anxiety. There seem to be reasons why this concept may have validity. Some people, like the psychologist Otto Rank, go further; he has put forth the theory that birth and the type of birth are the original causes of the neuroses, since all psycho-neuroses start with a state of anxiety. In this theory, birth is a kind of primary experience which starts the individual off badly by giving him an early anxiety from which he never

completely recovers. Most psychoanalysts, however, cannot see that there is any basis for this assumption. Freud, for example, attributed the peculiar human capacity for anxiety and neurosis not to birth trauma, but to the fact that the child nurtured in the human family suffers psychic traumas which are as traumatic as the trauma of birth and which therefore re-create the anxiety syndrome in situations where it is not biologically functional as it is at birth.²

Anxiety and the Threat of Death

Anxiety is an affect. By affect we mean an emotion or feeling tone. Some of the affects are happiness and sadness, elation and depression, and euphoria. Anxiety is a special affective state which grows out of the conflict between instinctual needs and a society that is unwilling or unable to gratify the needs. Instincts are the inclinations created by the demands inherent in the energy that is released as a result of the physiochemical processes of the body, the life processes themselves, which produce tension for which relief is required right from the onset of the first breath. Because of his helplessness the young child can only partially relieve himself of these tensions and gratify his instincts and so is under the necessity of being at the mercy of other humans in accomplishing this

²Sigmund Freud, New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (London: Hogarth Press, 1933), pp. 88ff.

end. He has a fairly well-developed sensory nervous system that makes the pain of his instinctual tensions felt, but a relatively undeveloped motor-nervous system with which to effect a relief of tension by himself. Hence, to gratify these instincts the child requires an object, something animate or inanimate in the environment. The necessity of enduring such tension too long by himself creates affects which, multiplied with the passing of time, result eventually in apathy or emotional coldness.

For the purposes of discussion and understanding we can relate anxiety to fear, but the two are different in certain ways. We speak of fear in connection with something of which the person is definitely and consciously aware. The affect from anxiety may be the same as that resulting from fear, and both have similar functions. Both are signals to the person that he is in some serious danger. The difference between fear and anxiety is that the actual cause of neurotic anxiety is not conscious and we usually do not know why we feel discomfort from it. In every neurosis and in every mental disease, anxiety is present. Anxiety is a very distressing state and the suffering from it can be far worse than suffering from a physical disease because it can last so long and because relief can be so difficult to obtain.

Anxiety is not confined to the mind. It is an all-over sensation and is felt in the body as well as in the

mind. Anna Freud, the daughter of Sigmund Freud, has made some major contributions to the understanding of anxiety and defenses against it.³ She makes a distinction between super-ego anxiety, objective anxiety, and instinctual anxiety. Super-ego anxiety has to do with problems of conscience and ideals and will be discussed later. Objective anxiety is similar to our definition of fear, in that it is in response to an external danger, whereas instinctual anxiety is of the nature discussed above.

Objective and instinctual anxiety are the types experienced at birth and during early infancy. The existentialists discuss another type which they call ontological anxiety. Basically it has to do with the anxiety associated with the fact and threat of non-being, death.

As an ontological quality, anxiety is as omnipresent as is finitude. Anxiety is independent of any special object which might produce it; it is dependent only on the threat of nonbeing--which is identical with finitude.⁴

Fear and Repression of Death

According to Tillich, then, anxiety is a persistent factor in man's psyche, for death is an ever-present threat. Tillich thinks that finitude is identical with non-being. The helplessness of the new-born infant is illustrative of

³Anna Freud, The Ego and Mechanisms of Defense (New York: International Universities Press, 1946).

⁴Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, p. 191.

his finitude, and from the moment of his birth, death becomes a frightening reality.

Norman Brown describes man as "the animal which has separated into conflicting opposites the biological unity of life and death, and has then subjected the conflicting opposites to repression."⁵ The anxiety surrounding death and man's attempt to conquer it, and/or to deny the fact of death, are apparent in so many of his activities. The history of Christmas is replete with such attempts.^{5a}

It is with birth that the human organism begins to develop a personality unique unto itself, yet is it birth or death which accounts for such individuality? Perhaps it is death which gives structural wholeness to individual existence: at the simplest organic level, any particular animal or plant has uniqueness and individuality because it lives its own life and no other--that is to say, because it dies. The precious ontological uniqueness which the human individual claims is conferred on him not by possession of an immortal soul but by possession of a mortal body."⁶

The intrinsic connection between death and

⁵Norman Brown, Life Against Death (New York: Vintage Books, 1959), p. 104.

^{5a}See Part I: Reassurance gained by the victory of life over death; light over darkness.

⁶Brown, op. cit., p. 104.

individuality is also suggested by hints contained in Freud's instinct theory. His identification of the life-instinct with sexuality identifies it with the force that preserves the immortality of the species. By implication, therefore, it is the death instinct which constitutes the mortal individuality of the particular member of the species. Furthermore, Freud's theory that Eros or the life instinct, as it operates in the human libido and in the lowest cells, aims to preserve and enrich life by seeking unification implicitly contains the theory that the aim of the death instinct is separation; and explicitly Freud's theory of anxiety brings birth and death together as separation crises. As Norman Brown points out, Freud is thus moving toward a structural analysis of organic life as being constituted by a dialectic between unification or interdependence and separation or independence. The principle of unification or interdependence sustains the immortal life of the species, and the principle of separation or independence gives the individual his individuality and ensures his death.⁷ Organisms die for internal reasons; death is no external accident. It is an intrinsic part of life. In Freud's words, "The goal of all life is death."⁸

If death gives life individuality and if man is the

⁷Ibid., p. 105.

⁸Sigmund Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle (London: Hogarth Press, 1950), p. 32.

organism which represses death, then man is the organism which represses his own individuality.⁹ This renders inaccurate our proud views of humanity as a species endowed with an individuality denied to lower animals.

One way of "escape" from death and individuality is sociability, and in this sense sociability is seen as a sickness. This essential point in the Freudian diagnosis of human sociability was seen by Roheim: men huddle into hordes as a substitute for parents, to save themselves from independence, from "being left alone in the dark."¹⁰ In this view, society was not constructed, as Aristotle says,¹¹ for the sake of some good, but from defect, from death and the flight from death, from fear of separation and fear of individuality. It is commonly known that in Freud's thought castration anxiety is a primary cause of psychological problems. He thus discusses fear of "separation and expulsion from the horde" in terms of castration

⁹See, for example, Eric Fromm, Escape from Freedom (New York: Rinehart, 1949).

¹⁰G. Roheim, "The Origin and Function of Culture," Nervous and Mental Disease Monograph, No. 69 (1943), pp. 77, 79, 98.

¹¹Aristotle, "Politics," in his The Works (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), X, 1252aff. "... every community is established with a view to some good; for mankind always acts in order to obtain that which they think good. But, if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest of all, which embraces all the rest, aims at good in a greater degree than any other, and at the highest good."

anxiety; but ultimately castration anxiety is accounted for in the fear of separation from the mother and the fear of death.¹²

Many analysts do not accept Freud's theory of a death instinct. Melanie Klein, however, is one who not only accepts it but goes further than Freud did. She believes the fear of death to be at the root of persecutory, and so, indirectly, of all anxiety. Freud's theory of a death instinct and Melanie Klein's view that there is also a basic fear of death are conceptually distinct. The first postulates a primary impulse to seek death; the second a primary impulse to fear and to avoid death. These do not logically exclude each other; the first may be supposed to stimulate the second. But neither do they necessarily imply each other. Freud was always impressed with the lengthy period of immaturity which human beings alone are subject to, with the long condition of dependence and helplessness of our early years. Those of the Kleinian school believe that one consequence of this is that the fear of death becomes a part of the infant's experience.¹³ The infant cannot maintain himself; absence of the parents, the means of life, entails loss of life. It is equally

¹²Sigmund Freud, Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety (London: Hogarth Press, 1936), pp. 93-95, 104-112.

¹³Melanie Klein, et. al., New Directions in Psycho-Analysis (New York: Basic Books, 1957), pp. 356-7, 501-8.

true, however, that union (e.g., complete return to womb) or fusion (e.g. at breast) also means death, for there is then a loss of individuality and identity. Tillich discusses the polarity between individualization and collectivization, pointing out that either one without the other equals death.¹⁴ Whether or not, then, the fear of death is a primary instinct or a reaction to an instinct, death remains as a source of anxiety and is a fact immediately established with birth.

The parent-child relationship, which is the nucleus of the family, constitutes a new mode of that interdependent union which is the essence of life, and at the same time it generates a new mode of individual independence which is the essence of death. The reactions of the child to the contradictions in his own psyche developed by his position in the family is anxiety; and anxiety is both a flight from death and a death experience. Anxiety is a response to experiences of absorption, conformity and death, and separateness, individuality and death. The human child, which at the mother's breast experiences a new and intense mode of fusion, of living, and of loving, also experiences a new and intenser mode of separation, individuality, and death. It is, then, believed that all subsequent separations and unions are experienced as a threat of death. Man

¹⁴Tillich, op. cit., I, p. 177.

both seeks death and fears it--life is in the "between" as Buber says.¹⁵ As a result, birth and death, which at the biological level are experienced once only, are at the human psychic level experienced constantly; the child can say with St. Paul, "I die daily." It is possible, however, that one could also say, "I am born daily," for "Life is a continually renewing and creating process, and one dies and is reborn many times."¹⁶

Norman Brown disagrees with the existentialist theologians (e.g., Paul Tillich) who say that anxiety about death has an ontological status. In his view such anxiety has only a historical status, and is relative to the repression of the human body; the horror of death is the horror of dying with unlived lines in our bodies. "That perfect, resurrected body which the Christian creed promises would want to die because it was perfect."¹⁷ Nietzsche, for example, can affirm life and therefore can affirm death.

Whatever hath become perfect, everything mature--
wanteth to die! . . . But everything immature wanteth
to live . . . But everything that suffereth wanteth to
live, that it may become mature and lively and

¹⁵See Martin Buber, Between Man and Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1951); and Martin Buber, I and Thou (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958).

¹⁶Jordan M. Scher, "The Concept of the Self in Schizophrenia," Journal of Existential Psychiatry (Spring, 1960), 76.

¹⁷Brown, op. cit., p. 108.

longing.¹⁸

The binding of life and death together magnifies life, though it takes the greatest strength to accept death. To cull death out of life (through repression or denial) is at life's expense, one consequence of which is the atrophying of the very senses with which man can grasp both life and death. The poet Rilke writes:

That man has . . . been cowardly has done life endless harm; the experiences that are called "visions", the whole so-called "spirit-world", death, all those things that are so closely akin to us, have by daily parring been so crowded out of life that the senses with which we could grasp them are atrophied.¹⁹

Brown says that it is the task of philosophy, psychoanalysis, and art to construct a human consciousness strong enough to accept death.²⁰ Can not theology and the church also be partners in this cause? The unification in consciousness of life and death can be accomplished only by full acceptance of both dimensions of existence. Both will be affirmed to the degree that neither are repressed. Man, who is born of woman and destined to die--a destiny which must be accepted--is a body with bodily instincts. Whether or not one accepts the death instinct as a fact, the total repression of any instinct is disintegrative. The

¹⁸Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra (New York: Modern Library, 1917), p. 362.

¹⁹R. M. Rilke, Letters to a Young Poet (New York: Norton, 1934), p. 67.

²⁰Brown, op. cit., p. 108.

affirmation of his inner being affirms both the life and death of man. Rilke's advice to the young artist describes well the quality of the affirming, non-repressing man.

Think, dear sir, of the world you carry within you . . . be attentive to that which rises up in you and set it above everything that you observe about you. What goes on in your innermost being is worthy of your whole love.²¹

The dualistic strain in church history and theology which regards the material, natural life as illusory or evil, or both, has influenced the Christian to think of his instinctual and passionate nature as his problem, not his prize. But a careful review of the scriptures such as done by William Graham Cole in Sex in Christianity and Psychoanalysis²² can help restore the historic affirmation of life and of the body--of the physical and material world. As Cole points out, the church is becoming less legalistic in approach, less moralistic in judgment, and less dualistic in theology, and the denial and repression of instincts which weakens man is giving way to the acceptance and conscious regulation of instincts, which strengthens the human-ego and confirms his individuality.

²¹Rilke, op. cit., p. 46. His advice is also "to let each impression and each germ of a feeling come to completion wholly in itself, in the dark, in the inexpressible, the unconscious, beyond the reach of one's own intelligence, and wait with deep humility and patience the birth-hour of a new clarity: that above is the artist's life: in understanding as in creating." (p. 29).

²²William G. Cole, Sex in Christianity and Psychoanalysis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955).

Death is an aspect of life which confers on life individuality, independence, and separateness. The repression of death and the repression of individuality produce symptoms which exhibit on the one hand a flight from independence and separateness, and on the other hand the compulsive return of the repressed.

Whether it is through repression of the death instinct, or of the fear of death, one effect of the incapacity to accept separation, individuality, and death is to erotize death--to activate a morbid wish to die, a wish to regress to the prenatal state before life (and separation) began, to the mother's womb.²³ Certainly one consequence of the Church's emphasis on immortality has been denial of the fact of death and at the same time the portrayal of death as being a desired end--or new beginning. Consider, for example, these verses from hymns of a recent period of the church.

There Is A Land of Pure Delight²⁴

There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign;
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain.
There everlasting spring abides,
And neverwithering flowers;
Death, like a narrow sea, divides
This heavenly land from ours.

²³Brown, op. cit., p. 115.

²⁴Isaac Watts, (1674-1748), "There Is A Land of Pure Delight," in The Service Hymnal (Chicago: Hope, 1961) p. 411.

No Night There²⁵

In the land of fadeless day
Lies the "city foursquare,"
It shall never pass away,
And there is "no night there."
God shall "wipe away all tears;"
There's no death, no pain, nor fears;
And they count not time by years,
For there is "no night there."

Even in the hymnals of more modern and contemporary churches, less fundamentalistic and conservative in their theology, we find hymns expressing desire for death. In Christian Worship, A Hymnal, used by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), we find:

O Mother Dear, Jerusalem²⁶

O mother dear, Jerusalem,
When shall I come to thee?
When shall my sorrows have an end?
Thy joys when shall I see?
O happy harbor of the saints!
O sweet and pleasant soil!
In thee no sorrow may be found,
No grief, no care, no toil.

Not all the hymns about death are of this nature to be sure. Some are more accepting of the fact of death and give expression to an affirming faith in the face of death. This verse written by John Greenleaf Whittier, for example, neither denies death, nor portrays it as being a desirable state of bliss.

²⁵John R. Clements (1868-), "No Night There," in Ibid., p. 419.

²⁶David Dickson (1583-1663), "O Mother Dear, Jerusalem," in Christian Worship, A Hymnal (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1960), p. 572.

I Know Not What The Future Hath²⁷

I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise
Assured alone that life and death
God's mercy underlies.
And if my heart and flesh are weak
To bear an untried pain,
The bruised reed He will not break,
But strengthen and sustain.

The anxiety of separation from the protecting mother underlies repression and neurosis. Such anxiety does seem to reflect, then, a revolt against death and individuality--sometimes expressed in its opposite, or at least in some deep disturbance in the organic unity of life and death. One of the hallmarks of the neurotic personality is a life-long fixation to the infantile pattern of dependence upon other people.²⁸ Such dependency has its roots in infancy, in fact, in the very moment of birth and the succeeding oral stage, and is in indication of the inability to accept separation and individuality. The unity of the mother and babe, so extensively portrayed at Christmas, is representative of both dependency and separation. They are a reminder, albeit unconscious, of the fact of one's own birth which destined him to death, and to whatever degree these factors are effective in an individual's life problems, they will effect his mood and celebration at Christmas.

²⁷John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892), "I Know Not What the Future Hath," in Ibid., p. 571.

²⁸Freud, New Introductory Lectures . . . , pp. 88-9.

Research has shown that it is in childhood that the adult's outlook concerning death begins to take on basic form.²⁹ There seems to be a natural development of thought regarding death in the child. Children between the ages of three and five years characteristically deny death as a regular and final process. It is viewed as a departure, a further existence under changed circumstances, and as being temporary. Living and lifeless are not yet distinguished. Those of us very familiar with the church and theology recognize some discomfoting associations between the death views of the three and five year old and the popular thought regarding death by a majority of Christian peoples.

The second stage of thought, which typifies children between the ages of five and nine, indicates that death is personified, considered a person. Death exists but the children still try to keep it distant from themselves. Only those die whom the death-man carries off. Death is an eventuality; it is seen as outside us and not universal.

Finally, in the third stage, which becomes prominent in children in their ninth and tenth years, death is recognized as a process which takes place in all of us, the perceptible result of which is the dissolution of bodily life. By then children know that death is inevitable. In

²⁹Maria H. Nage, "The Child's View of Death," in Herman Fiefel, The Meaning of Death (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), pp. 79-98.

this stage not only the child's conception of death becomes more realistic, but the child's general view of the world veers in this direction. We know, however, that when a person is confronted with a fact which he is not able to integrate and which causes anxiety, he is liable to regress to earlier and more infantile modes of coping. Directly or indirectly the Church has been a cooperating partner with such regression, so that many Christian people think about death as does the three to five year old child.

Herman Feifel writes in Clues to Suicide³⁰ that for most religious persons, death represents "the dissolution of bodily life" and "the doorway to a new life." Such a view reflects the common view of Platonic dualism--that the body and the soul are separate and distinct entities. Such a view, however, is not scriptural, and not really Christian. Dualism regards the realm of matter as illusory or evil, or both, and displays a marked preference for the 'spiritual'. In contrast, and consistent with the scriptures (both Old and New Testament) is the view of naturalism which is one of a positive and accepting attitude toward the physical, material world, and which views man as a living soul without distinguishing between the body

³⁰Herman Feifel, "Some Aspects of the Meaning of Death," in Edwin S. Shneidman and Norman Farberow, (eds.), Clues to Suicide (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1957), p. 56.

and soul.³¹

For some people death is a "rest" and "peaceful sleep." It is interesting to note that in Homer's Iliad, Sleep (Hypnos) and Death (Thanatos) are alluded to as twin brothers;³² to others, death is perceived as an adventure--so well expressed in Lord Balfour's dying words, "This is going to be a great experience." But there are also those who put up a desperate fight against death--beautifully described by Dylan Thomas, the Welsh poet, "Do not go gentle into that good night . . . rage, rage, against the dying of the light."³³ Again we see the symbolization of life and death in the form of light and darkness.

Birth is an uncontrolled event, but the manner of one's departure from life may bear a definite relation to one's philosophy of life and death. To consider death as a purely biological event would indeed be to err grievously. Its meaning for the individual can serve as an important organizing principle in determining how he conducts himself in life, including his attitudes toward taking his own life.

³¹Cole, op. cit., p. 3ff.

³²Cf., e.g., Homer, The Iliad (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1950), p. 304. "No, if you love and pity Sarpedon, let him fall in mortal combat with Patroclus, and when the breath has left his lips send Death and the sweet god of Sleep to take him up and bring him to the broad realm of Lycia . . ."

³³Feifel, "Some Aspects . . .," p. 56.

Fear of Death and Suicide at Christmas

The birth-death confrontation implicit in the celebration of Christmas may be a significant factor in the dynamics underlying suicide during the holiday.

The season makes a greater demand upon people's capacity to be good and kind and happy and giving, a demand which may produce increased tension, anxiety and depression. There may also be feelings of guilt and unworth about things that were done in the past which should not have been done. The spirit of good fellowship and cheer mobilizes these guilts in ways not done any other time of the year.

Such feelings may rise at Christmas because of the pleasant memories of childhood Christmases to which people in emotional trouble want to return--but cannot. Often these longings are unconscious; the person does not even realize that his brain is being triggered by the sights, sounds and symbols of Christmas to release memories which affect present actions in ways he does not suspect. It is not children who are unhappy at Christmas, it is the adults. Feelings of guilt fear, disappointment and depression have had time to accumulate in the adult. Children are still in the process of integrating and growing: adults have reached the stage where lack of integration and wholeness have negative effects upon their mood, thought and behavior.

Yet, underlying such feelings, which may or may not

be conscious, there is still the confrontation with birth and/or the experience of emotional re-birth at Christmas may cathect anxiety about death. One of the motives seen operative in suicide is that it is employed as an aid in coping with an overpowering fear of death.³⁴ Suicide in this sense serves as a reaction formation to the morbidly-feared eventuality of death by embracing it rather than running from it.

Suicide is a very complex human act which ranks among the first ten in the morbid list of "killers" in the United States.³⁵ Once every minute, or even more often, someone in the United States either kills himself or tries to kill himself with conscious intent. Sixty or seventy times every day these attempts succeed.³⁶ Statistics do not bear out the common belief that the suicide rate goes up at Christmas. "We get more calls at Christmas than usual, but there is no significant change in the number of actual suicides," said a Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center psychologist.³⁷ The fact that the calls increase

³⁴Charles Wahl, "Suicide as a Magical Act," in Shneidman, op. cit., p. 26.

³⁵Edwin S. Shneidman and Norman Farberow, "Suicide and Death," in Feifel, The Meaning of Death, p. 284.

³⁶Karl Menninger, "Forward," in Shneidman, Clues to Suicide, p. v.

³⁷Harry Nelson, "Feel 'No, No' About 'Ho, Ho?' You Have Christmas Neurosis," Los Angeles Times, (December 23, 1966), 22.

indicates, however, that suicide as a way of coping with life at Christmas is considered extensively.

There seems to be three co-existing unconscious or partially conscious determinants of suicide. (1) Self-directed aggression. (2) Rebirth and restitution. (3) Despair, loss of self-esteem, and the real or imagined loss of the love object.³⁸ The first motive consists of feelings of hostility or rage toward important persons whom the person blames for his present frustration which, because of fear, guilt, or anxiety, became self-directed. Suicide in this regard is really, then, homicide--an act of murder. The Catholic Church denies to man the right of committing suicide on the basis of the Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," and suicide in any form and for any reason is forbidden and penalties are stated for it.

Karl Menninger, in Man Against Himself,³⁹ discusses what he believes to be three elements in any suicide-- the wish to kill, the wish to be killed, and the wish to die. The first two points are an expression of the talion law: "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." The third element involves the controversial death instinct. Some analysts have stressed unchanneled aggression rather than

³⁸Don D. Jackson, "Theories of Suicide," in Shneidman, Clues to Suicide, p. 15.

³⁹Karl Menninger, Man Against Himself (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1938).

the death instinct as being of prime importance in motivating suicide. In this sense, then, suicide always involves another person--though the involvement may be in unconscious thought--toward whom the person feels rage.

The second determinant, rebirth and restitution, seems to be particularly relevant to the suicides of children and schizophrenics. The idea contains, in part, the thought of making a new start by destroying the old (bad) self. There is also the belief that through death one is joined with the love object from whom he feels separated. In discussing this determinant, Don Jackson writes that it may also play a part in the clinical observation that suicidal attempts or feelings may result from fear of the mother's becoming pregnant again and being lost to a younger sibling (see next section on Birth and Siblings).

It has been felt that suicide is related to the feelings about birth of a new cycle--a new season, a new year, and so forth. It is as if the individual might feel: "I cannot face another birth, a time when other people are happy. I cannot face the creative feel of a new day or a new week when I am so alone and unwanted."⁴⁰

The idea of being alone and left to die has obvious associations to the fear of separation and death connected with birth. But it also has connections with sleep. For example, the child goes to sleep for the "good mother" and eagerly awaits the reunion next morning. The child who is

⁴⁰Jackson, op. cit., p. 18.

sent to sleep by the "bad" mother feels himself to be bad and unloved, and may fear sleep much as the adult fears death, since the good mother may be permanently gone. Once asleep, however, wish-fulfilling processes (dreams) may ease the pain, and in the morning there may be a joyous reunion and the reappearance of the good mother. Hence, ideas about sleep can be intimately connected with later unconscious preoccupation with death in that it is thought of as a way of reuniting oneself with the original love object. The idea of suicide being a new beginning with the original love object as supported also by observations on suicide occurrences or attempts on the anniversary of the death or departure of a loved one.

A woman committed suicide by cutting her throat and wrists a year from the day her husband had left her. During her childhood her mother had died of suffocation due to a throat tumor.⁴¹

This idea of reunion in death with a loved one is, in the author's opinion, an important determinant of suicide at Christmas time, especially among those who feel isolated, separated, unwanted--independent in a negative sense.⁴²

The third determinant is not quite so directly related to the experience of birth itself. Loss of self-

⁴¹Ibid.---

⁴²It might be noted that the idea of reunion in death with loved ones is a common belief of many devout Christians.

esteem, feeling of hopelessness and meaninglessness, and deep depression is rooted more in the dynamics and crises of the oral and later developmental stages.

Reassurance does not vanquish anxiety about death, and probably such anxiety can never be totally eliminated. But attempting to cope with it by repressing the fact of death, which is ultimately the repression of individuality and life, is one of the primary factors in fixation at an infantile level, neuroses and psychosis. As C. W. Wahl points out, it is "the consistent experience of psychiatry that any defense which enables us to persistently escape the perception of any fundamental internal or external reality is psychologically costly."⁴³ Just because something is not perceived does not mean it has no relevance; it may then be even more relevant to man's condition as he attempts to cope with the facts of life (and death). Lack of perception can only inhibit and limit his ability to live an abundant life. Repression, denial, isolation, and/or un-doing (negative magic) of death never aids the enrichment of life. The rigid maintenance of such defenses prevents the development of integrity and wholeness. And to the degree that Christmas reinforces such defenses in contrast to affirming life in the face of death, it is an unholy time.

⁴³Charles Wahl, "The Fear of Death," in Feifel, The Meaning of Death, p. 19.

It is not being suggested that the glad celebration of the festival is psychologically harmful in and of itself. The needed affirmation of life is intrinsic to the meaning and significance of Christmas, but such affirmation is only genuine to the degree that death is also affirmed. Neither is it being suggested, necessarily, that death should be a topic of discussion at Christmas. It should be recognized, however, that much of the anxiety of the Christmas season is in regard to death, and that it may be intensified at this time of the year by the very emphasis upon birth.

An interesting occurrence has been witnessed by the author which, in his opinion, is an illustrative piece of evidence confirming the fact that birth and death are intimately related even though the association be unconscious. On Christmas Sunday, 1965, and again on Christmas Sunday, 1966, the minister in the church attended by the author and his family made the same slip of the tongue. Both years, when he meant to say "Christmas," the minister said "Easter"--and then corrected himself.

II. THE BIRTH OF SIBLINGS

Christmas is a time of birth which can intensify whatever anxiety a person has about death. But it is also a time of birth of a baby, and can, therefore, intensify a person's feelings (conscious and unconscious) about siblings.

Any change in a child's circumstances tends to have a traumatic effect on his development and the birth of a new sibling is no exception. The child (and the immature adult) resists change; that is, he is disturbed by anything that will deprive him of his accustomed modes of gratification or by anything he thinks will deprive him of them. He reacts to this inner feeling of discomfort by feeling antagonistic and annoyed with the source of his deprivation. When a new baby is born in a family, the older child in reality is deprived of a certain amount of the parent's time and attention. So much is being done for the new baby that the older child, contrasting the much smaller amount now being done for him, feels he is being deprived more than he really is. Often, however, the parents are really more interested in the new baby and tend by their every action to demonstrate this preference to the older child. The older child may react to his feeling of deprivation by a painful feeling of loneliness. The feeling is acute and he will do something to get rid of it. One way would be to mobilize his aggressive drives to change the situation. This method is expressed by strong feelings of jealousy. In his jealousy he may actually attack or injure the new baby, he may make derogatory remarks about him or express wishes that he be sent away. If his parents object too much to his behavior or if he seems to feel guilty about his jealous feelings, he may still

express them but in a disguised form: the baby is bad; it cries a lot and should be punished; etc., thus rationalizing his expression of hostility.

If the feeling of guilt is great, the child may seem to have no jealousy at all, and may appear to have no feeling for the baby except love and adoration. But through clumsiness he may injure the baby and thus exercise his desire to hurt it (of which he may be unconscious) by denying it and by feeling that he is too inept to do things properly. Or he may displace his hostility on to other small children in the neighborhood or at school.

Another method by which the child soothes his feeling of loneliness is to act out a fantasy that he has remained the baby. Instead of openly expressing his jealousy he may become demanding of his mother's love and attention--the attention she seems to be giving the new baby. He may develop a feeding difficulty, become timid and fearful, resort to childish speech, start to wet or soil himself again, or adopt other regressive behaviors.

It is reasonable to expect that children will naturally feel jealous of a newcomer, but the child who already is really certain of his parents' love does not have too much difficulty in making an adjustment. That which establishes such certainty of love in the mind of the child is to be discussed in the next chapter.

If the older child's feelings of loneliness and

deprivation are intense, he will probably experience rather deep depression, and as indicated, will probably regress to earlier modes of relationship.

Competition and Unresolved Sibling Rivalry

In an article discussing the "Christmas 'Neurosis'"⁴⁴ Bryce Boyer contends that the depressions which occur during the Christmas season are primarily the result of reawakened conflicts related to unresolved sibling rivalries. On the basis of seventeen patients who suffered Christmas depressions, he tentatively suggests that partly because the holiday celebrates the birth of a child so favored that competition with him is futile, earlier memories, especially of oral frustration, are rekindled.

The precipitating agents of depression are diverse. Experiences which precede depression involve a loss of self-esteem.⁴⁵ Failures of prestige or monetary matters, disappointment in love or death of dear ones, incidents which force an individual to feel a sense of inferiority, and even successes which cause people to fear punishment or the imposition of greater and more threatening duties, precipitate depression. A loss of narcissistic gratification is present. The depressed person feels he has lost

⁴⁴Bryce Boyer, "Christmas 'Neurosis'," Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, III (1955), 467-8.

⁴⁵Otto Fenichel, The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis (New York: Norton, 1945), p. 390.

everything and the world is empty if his loss of self-esteem is due to a withdrawal of external support or that he has lost everything because he is undeserving, if it is due to a loss of superego support. When a love object is lost (e.g., mother, mate, child), libidinal strivings, which are no longer bound to the object, flood the mourner. The result is anxiety. Frequently the person retains the belief that the "dead" one lives. In order that this may be done, "he regresses from object relationships to identification through incorporation (eating and retention)."⁴⁶ That people take on the qualities of lost loved ones has been widely described.⁴⁷ Insatiable hunger and eating, unconsciously equated with eating the dead person and reminiscent of totem festivals, is a common component of grief. The folklore of death customs and the reactions of children to death reveal that introjection is a frequent reaction to the loss of love objects.⁴⁸ After the introjection phase of mourning has been established, the ties to the incorporated object are loosened, and the bound energy is

⁴⁶Boyer, op. cit., p. 478.

⁴⁷Karl Abraham, "Object Loss and Introjection in Normal Mourning and in Abnormal States of Mind," in his Selected Papers (London: Hogarth Press, 1948), p. 433. Also, Roger Money-Kyrle, Superstition and Society (London: Hogarth Press, 1939), p. 56.

⁴⁸Sigmund Freud, "Identification," in his Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (London: Hogarth Press, 1948), p. 60.

then available for attachment elsewhere. The insatiable hungers at Christmas time, especially for sweets and alcoholic beverages may well have to do with attempts to identify through incorporation of "lost" love-objects. (Further discussion on this is included in the next section of this chapter.)

In the patients observed by Boyer, various causes of loss of self-esteem occurred at Christmas time. Cash shortage sometimes caused the patients to feel that they were unequal to their rivals, real or fancied. Primarily, however, the loss of prestige they experienced appeared to have been precipitated by the meaning they attached to the anniversary of Christ's birth. In him they saw a sibling rival with whom they could not possibly compare. This reminded them of what they had perceived to be unsuccessful rivalries with their real or imagined siblings during their childhoods. Their responses were basically depressive. Their reactions were handled in manners which had been peculiarly developed during the courses of their lives. One patient, for example, acted out her childhood disappointment by arranging to be rejected, in order that she could perceive her depressive feelings to be based in the present and so that she would not be confronted with their original meanings.

Each of the patients observed craved complete oral satisfaction from the mother, that is, a return to the

early period of life during which a child perceives his mother to be an extension of himself and under his wishful domination (see next section). The father as well as the brother or sister is often seen as a rival for the mother's breast and the patient's wished for status.⁴⁹

According to official Catholic teachings, Christ had no earthly father and no siblings.⁵⁰ Whether he had a terrestrial father or the men Jesus chose to call his brothers, is not an issue so far as popular thought has been concerned. Millions have chosen to believe that there must have been a son so fortunate as to have been the permanently primary object of his asexual mother's love. In the book The Virgin and Child⁵¹ it is pointed out that before the birth of Christ, the mother-child theme was rarely portrayed in both the Eastern and Western artistic productions of man. Subsequently, however, religious paintings and sculptures have commonly employed that symbol of unity as a central topic.⁵² The popularity of the madonna paintings, which very rarely include any suggestion of father or

⁴⁹Bertram Lewin, The Psychoanalysis of Elation (New York: Norton, 1950), p. 53.

⁵⁰Cf. Juniper B. Carol, Mariology (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1960), III, p. 426.

⁵¹T. Bodkin, The Virgin and Child (London: Faber and Faber, 1945), p. 2.

⁵²Ibid. "The spreading of the Christian faith eventually rendered portrayal of mother and child the most popular of all aims in the visual arts of Europe."

sibling, illustrates man's preoccupation with that dynamic idea. It was pointed out earlier that there seems to be reason behind the suggestion that Christianity survived in its struggles with Mithraism because of its emphasis upon the mother and the child. Boyer adds another dimension to this when he says, "one must wonder whether Christianity has succeeded in becoming the popular religion of the Western world at least partially because of the unconscious dream in all of us to retain the early belief in the unity of mother and child."⁵³

It has been shown that Christmas stemmed originally from festivals onto which Christian coloring was superimposed. In recent centuries, man has mastered the preservation of his crops and learned enough about the movements of celestial bodies that worries concerning the reappearance of the sun have been determined to be unrealistic. Nevertheless, his infantile anxieties about starvation have not lessened. Christmas is still an acceptable medium through which man can express those fears and attempt to deny their existence. "He is able to give to his children, and feel that he himself is fed by a beneficent mother. Perhaps this explains why it has been possible to a varying extent for Santa Claus to displace God as the figure to be worshiped."⁵⁴

⁵³Boyer, op. cit., p. 481.

⁵⁴Ibid.

Conflicts in the Giving of Gifts

Yet Christmas anxieties continue. The cultural expectations of Christmas cause no end of inner conflicts when people try to act in ways they think they should. Families convene with the hope that old conflicts of various natures (Including sibling rivalry) can be denied or resolved.⁵⁴ Yet getting the family together in and of itself can cause conflict. Should we invite the whole family for Christmas dinner, even though we know ahead of time Aunt Mabel will get angry at the children for making so much noise and Uncle Joe will sit in a corner and sulk? If we do not invite her, we feel guilty. If we do, we feel tense. Whom shall we feed?

There is the consistent effort at Christmas, especially in America, to minimize hostility and to maximize kindness, cooperation and peace. Christ is portrayed as the Prince of Peace and Christianity is interpreted as a religion of love and brotherhood.⁵⁵ Thus we have the Christmas truce when war is temporarily stopped, prisoners are pardoned, and executions are stayed. But the intensity of the effort is only in response to the intensity of the hostilities which exist.

⁵⁴Ernest Jones, "The Significance of Christmas," in Essays in Applied Psycho-Analysis (New York: International Universities Press, 1964), II, 223.

⁵⁵James H. Barnett, "Christmas in American Culture," Psychiatry, IX:1 (February 1946), 51-65.

Popular literature not infrequently portrays the hostilities which exist at Christmas.⁵⁶ The angers frequently revolve about the theme of who will get the most and whether monetary sacrifices can be tolerated without harm to the givers. "It is more blessed to give than to receive" is an admonition which is necessary only because man's impulses to receive rather than to give are foremost. Yet conflict about receiving is heightened at Christmas: for many, receiving produces feelings of shame and uneasiness, possibly because of their unconscious desires to receive (their greed) about which they feel guilty and anxious. Some are unhappy because the affluent spirit of Christmas underscores their own poverty. Christmas advertising gets more and more magnificent, and so many expensive gifts are offered you are made to feel like a Scrooge if you cannot buy expensive gifts for everyone. One psychoanalyst described the behavior of the shopping public: ". . . people look like lemmings rushing off to drown themselves in a sea of expensive gifts."⁵⁷

There has developed the practice of gift-exchanging in contrast to gift-giving at Christmas time, a practice

⁵⁶Cf. Agatha Christie, A Holiday for Murder (New York: Avon, 1952). Also Paul Coates, "Hark the Jeers Amid Cheers," Los Angeles Times (December 15, 1965).

⁵⁷Harold Greenwald interviewed by Joy Miller, "Christmas Season One of Melancholia," (New York: Associated Press, December 1966).

which in some ways violates the very spirit of Christmas. It too, however, can be related to early sibling rivalry and making sure that "he doesn't get more than I do."

James Barnett describes the characteristics of gift-exchanging in the American society.

First, gifts should be adjusted to the status relations of those participating in the exchange. Persons of approximately equal material resources should give each other gifts of approximately equal value, and experimentation indicates, to those involved, the proper financial level on which to place the gift, as well as the type of gift appropriate to the degree of intimacy involved in the relationship. Second, gifts exchanged should be adjusted to sex and age factors involved in the relationship, as well as to the degree of intimacy implied by the gift.

... .
An evidence of the exchange nature of gift-giving in American society is found in the fact that cessation of giving by one party to prior annual exchanges is followed probably by his failure to receive a gift the next Christmas. The pattern can be verbalized crudely as follows: "If you give me an appropriate gift, then I shall give one to you." This view holds only so long as the relationship is satisfactory.⁵⁸

Barnett believes this pattern of exchanging expresses the nature of affective social relations existing between and among people at a given time, and is not strictly gainful or materialistic in intent. Warren O. Harstrom, associate professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin, also comments upon the fact that giving does not seem to have much of a role anymore; that there is a subtle reciprocity expected. But when it comes to giving gifts to children, especially in the guise of Santa

⁵⁸Barnett, op. cit., p. 58.

Claus, "a gift becomes not subtle at all, but a bribe."⁵⁹ There may be considerable variation in the degree to which Santa is used as a child control device by parents, but there is much concern about such use of Santa in terms of its effects upon children and families. An excellent critique of the subject is Renzo Sereno's "Some Observations on the Santa Claus Custom."⁶⁰ More discussion of the use of Santa Claus will follow.

Christmas heightens all feelings--plus or minus. General anxiety increases for the lonely, the divorced, the people who cannot be with someone they are interested in. Yet many such feelings of tension and anxiety, and depression, are felt by people who do spend the holiday with the people they want. The fact of separation would effect the mood of anybody, especially at Christmas, but it seems reasonable to suppose that ultimately such affects result from the person's unconscious fears and desires stemming from its first separation--birth, and/or from unresolved sibling rivalry which reawakens oral conflicts.

The Acting-Out of Childbirth

Children play an important role in the celebration of Christmas. It is common for adults to remark at

⁵⁹The (Whittier, California) Daily News, December 20, 1966.

⁶⁰Renzo Sereno, "Some Observations on the Santa Claus Custom," Psychiatry, XIV:4 (November 1951), 387-396.

Christmas that "they want to have a nice Christmas for the children." It is quite probably, as James Barnett points out, that this statement expresses infantile emotions and fantasies, since adult Christmas behavior often exhibits regressive characteristics.⁶¹ It is commonly noted that adults play with toys purchased for children at Christmas, and overeating and drinking--particularly of foods liked in childhood--are common experiences. It may be surmised also that some adults unconsciously want their children to have the same kind of Christmas experience that they enjoyed and thus seek to recapture their childhood Christmas experiences vicariously. As well, adults whose memories of Christmases of their childhood are unhappy have been known to avow that their children shall "at least have a happy Christmas." This latter concern probably expresses the feeling that the adults were cheated out of a rightful and pleasant experience in their childhood and are determined that this shall not be the lot of their children. But in such a case, the determination may have mixed motives, including hostility toward one's own parents, which tend to make it incumbent upon the children to have a happy Christmas for the sake of the parent.

Christmas in the United States is uniquely a family festival. The sociologist, James Barnett, comments that

⁶¹Barnett, op. cit., p. 60.

"the holiday derives much of its appeal from the fact that it arouses, reinforces and exploits the sentiments, beliefs and practices associated with family and domestic life."⁶² In addition to the fact that Christmas is "for the children" Barnett points out that the adults often become "the children" when they return to their family of origin for the Christmas holidays. This term is applied to adults who are parents themselves and who have attained full adult status in their group relations and position in society.

The significance of family life and childhood at Christmas is underscored by Richard Sterba, a psychoanalyst, who has offered the interesting thesis that Christmas in terms of emotional orientation is parallel to the social pattern of childbirth behavior in a household. Thus, he comments:

First there is a long preparatory period of growing excitement and impatient secret anticipation which corresponds to the period of pregnancy. Everybody is "expecting." The typical Christmas rush is filled with the same hasty preparation and excitement which goes on in the family when a woman is in labor. Adults act on the unconscious idea of "a woman in labor" not only towards children but actually towards each other as if they themselves were both children and grownups. Everything is full of secrecy and prohibitions surrounding the preparation of presents for the others, busy first with buying them, then with tenderly wrapping them and finally hiding them. One person tells the other that he is not supposed to enter this or that room where the preparatory work goes on. Persons shout at one another if they enter this or that room or look at the prohibited object, exactly as if a birth were taking place and the children were being

⁶²Ibid.

anxiously kept away from any possibility of observing and finding out about it.⁶³

If one accepts the implications of Sterba's analogy, it offers valuable insight into the culturally conditioned emotional character of the "Christmas Spirit." The sociologist believes it explains something of the common elation, good fellowship, friendliness and generosity so characteristic of most individuals at Christmas time; it affords clues to the often curiously childlike and unexpected behavior of adults at the holiday season. It is possible, as well, that negative reactions to Christmas can be related in these terms to family orientations, and to the influence of births upon older children (sibling rivalry).

Sterba says that "the whole sequence of emotional experiences at Christmas is so striking, and once recognized shows its significance so clearly, that it hardly needs confirmation through further symbolic interpretation."⁶⁴ He points out that it is not surprising that the presents come down the chimney since fireplace and chimney signify vulva and vagina in the unconscious, and the child-present thus comes out of the birth canal. He sees, then, Santa Claus as a father representative and the unconscious

⁶³Richard Sterba, "On Christmas," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, XIII:1 (1944), 80.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 81.

knowledge of the fact that the father has something to do with childbirth is indicated in this way. This is similar to the stork fable, where the bird with the long beak brings the child.

A less obvious but relevant significance of Santa Claus is indicated in a remark of a five year old boy as reported by Sterba. When this boy noticed his aunt's pregnancy he remarked, "Aunt Clara gets fat as Santa Claus." Thus Santa Claus with his fat belly is a pregnant woman, and he acts in a most natural way when he drops his presents down the chimney--just as animals giving birth "drop" their young. Sterba sees Santa's bag full of presents as another symbol of the pregnant abdomen and believes it corresponds to the doctor's bag in which the child is supposed to arrive. He also points out that the fusion of masculine and feminine attributes in one person in the stories which are used to hide the facts of childbirth from children, symbolically tell them of the fusion of male and female for procreative purposes, and that we are again unable to lie without revealing the truth.

It is interesting to note that one of the oldest legends about St. Nicholas is connected with childbirth. It runs as follows:

Three boys, on their journey home from school, take lodging at an inn, or as some versions have it, farmhouse. In the night the treacherous host and hostess murder the boys, cut up their three bodies, and throw the pieces into casks used for salting meat. In the morning St. Nicholas appears and calls the guilty ones

to task. They deny their guilt, but are convicted when the saint causes the boys, sound of body and limb, to arise from the casks.⁶⁵

A picture by Lorenzo di Bicci (1373-1452), "St. Nicholas and the Murdered School Boys," in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, shows the three boys emerging out of three narrow barrels, so that "no doubt is left about the birth act through which they come to life."⁶⁶ Sterba thinks that the salted meat out of which they are resurrected refers to the idea of oral conception, and he also thinks that the sweets and presents of food at Christmas are also related to oral conception. Oral conception is not an uncommon idea. Children are told that the fetus is in the mother's stomach--how else would it get there? Several women who have counseled with the author have reported that they were terribly frightened after their first necking experience in adolescence, afraid that they would become pregnant.

Another interpretation applicable to the salted meat from which the boys emerged, again related to conception and birth, is offered by Ernest Jones in "The Symbolic Significance of Salt in Folklore and Superstition."⁶⁷ Salt became the symbol of procreation, and was used in this

⁶⁵George McKnight, St. Nicholas (New York: Putnam and Sons, 1917), p. 47.

⁶⁶Sterba, op. cit., p. 82.

⁶⁷Ernest Jones, "The Symbolic Significance of Salt in Folklore and Superstition," in Essays in Applied Psychoanalysis, II, 22-109.

connection in two ways, to promote fertility and to avert barrenness or impotence. The latter is illustrated by Elisha's action of throwing salt into the fountain of Jerico (2 Kings 11:21): "Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; and for the future they shall not be the occasion either of death or barrenness." Even more specifically, salt has long symbolized and been used to represent semen.⁶⁸

This understanding of Christmas, that the behavior of both children and adults is an acting out of childbirth in the family as well as the celebration of the birth of the Christ Child, adds another dimension to our understanding of the significance of Christmas. Even though it has to do with birth, and therefore was included in this section of the chapter, the interpretation is based primarily upon the dynamics of the oedipal stage of development (which will be discussed later), rather than upon the significance of birth to the newborn person or the dynamics of the oral stage including sibling rivalry.

SUMMARY

The moment of birth destines one to death, and the emphasis upon birth at Christmas confronts one with the facts of his own birth: his own separation, individuality, and death. Such confrontation is often producing of fear

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 104.

and anxiety, and depression, against which man attempts to defend himself by denial and repression, and acting-out in various social ways. Christmas provides for both disintegrative and integrative expression of such dynamics.

Fear of death and/or separation which may be intensified at Christmas is one of the determinants of suicide, which may be utilized as a reaction formation to the morbidly feared eventuality of death by embracing it rather than running from it. Another determinant, that of the idea of rebirth and restitution also has relevance to the dynamics of Christmas.

Unresolved hostilities toward siblings, even though unconscious, have been seen to be intensified by the celebration of the birth of the favored Christ Child. Such hostilities and their consequences play an important part in the behaviors and emotional reactions at Christmas.

Christmas has also been interpreted as an acting out of childbirth by both adults and children in which oedipal dynamics are prevalent.

CHAPTER II

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HOPE

Some of the behavior and affect at Christmas have their roots and significance in the dynamics of the first months of life. Man first experiences love, hate, pleasure and frustration in the critical relation between the infant and his mother. In the quality of that relationship is laid the foundations of goodness and evil, not as abstractions, but as experientially real dimensions of being. In the resolution of the tensions and conflicts of these first months the rudiments of hope are established.

Oral eroticism is acted out and satisfied in many ways during the holidays. At the same time, however, the fears, ambivalences, and anxieties of orality emerge. There is, then, a balance or imbalance of peace and anxiety, of trust and fear, of pleasure and frustration implicit in the Christmas celebration. The underlying dynamics of these factors are deeply imbedded in the psyche, and their meanings and purposes, even their presence may be completely unconscious. Yet the more accepting and understanding of such dynamics we are, the greater our opportunity and the greater the possibility for integration and wholeness; the greater the possibility that Christmas will be a time of

holiness.¹

The indispensable virtue hope and the quality of basic trust are discussed in this chapter. These both emerge in the dynamics of the oral stage, the fundamentals of which are included in the second section of the chapter. The third section then discusses the behaviors and moods of Christmas in regard to these factors.

I. HOPE: AN INDISPENSABLE VIRTUE

Hope is both the earliest and the most indispensable virtue in the state of being alive. Many have called this deepest quality confidence, and Erikson refers to trust as the earliest positive psychosocial attitude. In his discussion of the basic virtues, however, Erikson says that "if life is to be sustained hope must remain, even where confidence is wounded, trust impaired."² Clinicians know

¹The author's interest in the significance of Christmas began several years ago, and was stimulated by an experience involving depression and hostility. A therapy group which had been meeting a number of months met two weeks before Christmas. The mood of the group was melancholy; the people seemed bogged down. The author, the therapist for the group, was struck by the absence of the "Christmas spirit", and asked, "How are you feeling about Christmas?" By the end of the session every person in the group had given expression to hostility in one form or another--dread, boredom, resentment, wishing it were over. In the closing moments the mood became increasingly "alive", and the people left with a new spirit. Being blocked in their hostility, they were approaching Christmas without much joy; once it was accepted without guilt or judgment they were more free.

²Erik Erikson, Insight and Responsibility (New York: Norton, 1964), p. 115.

that an adult who has lost all hope, regresses into as lifeless a state as a living organism can sustain. Yet there is something in the structure even of mature hope which suggests that it is the most childlike of all ego-qualities, and the most dependent for its verification on the charity of fate. Thus the church and religious sentiment induces adults to restore their hopefulness in periodic petitionary prayer, assuming a measure of childlikeness toward unseen, omnipotent powers. Throughout the ages man has found reassurance and hope in the re-birth of light at the winter solstice assuming that it was through the grace of the omnipotent gods.

Nothing in human life, however, is secured in its origin unless it is verified in the intimate meeting of partners in favorable interpersonal relationships. Hope relies for its beginnings on the new being's first encounter with trustworthy maternal persons, who respond to his need for intake and contact with warm and calming envelopment and provide food both pleasurable to eat and easy to digest, and who prevent experience of the kind which may regularly bring too little too late fully to satisfy and relieve the frustrations of the infant; the tension and pain have already made their mark. What we often consider to be the maternal instinct and to which we attribute the mother's response to her needing infant, is far from being a merely instinctive, or a merely instinctual matter.

Biological motherhood needs at least three links with social experience.

The mother's past experience of being mothered; a conception of motherhood shared with trustworthy contemporary surroundings; and an all-enveloping world-image tying past, present, and future into a convincing pattern of providence. Only thus can mothers provide.³

Hope is verified by a combination of experiences in the individual's "prehistoric" era, the time before speech and verbal memory. Both psychoanalysis and genetic psychology consider central in that period of growth the secure apperception of an "object." The psychologists mean by this the ability to perceive the enduring quality of the thing world, while psychoanalysts speak loosely of a first love-object, i.e., the experience of the care-taking person as a coherent being, who reciprocates one's physical and emotional needs in expectable ways and therefore deserves to be endowed with trust, and whose face is recognized as it recognizes. The first knowledge, the first verification, and thus the basis of hope occurs in such an object-relationship.

Once established as a basic quality of experience, hope remains independent of the verifiability of "hopes." It is in the nature of man's maturation that concrete hope will, at a time when a hoped-for event or state comes to pass, prove to have been quietly superseded by a more

³Ibid., p. 116.

advanced set of hopes. The gradual widening of the infant's active experience provides, at each step, verifications so rewarding that they inspire new hopefulness. At the same time, the infant develops a greater capacity for renunciation, together with the ability to transfer disappointed hopes to better prospects; and he "learns to dream what is imaginable and to train his expectations on what promises to prove possible."⁴ Maturing hope, then maintains itself in the face of changed facts, but even as faith is said to move mountains, hope proves itself able to change facts. Erikson says that from an evolutionary point of view, it seems that hope must help man to approximate a measure of that rootedness possessed by the animal world, in which instinctive equipment and environment, beginning with the maternal response, verify each other, unless catastrophe overtakes the individual or the species.

To the human infant, his mother is nature. She must be that original verification, which, later, will come from other and wider segments of reality. All the self-verifications, therefore, begin in that inner light of the mother-child-world, which Madonna images convey as being so exclusive and so secure. This light must continue to shine through the chaos of many crises; the crises of the developmental stages toward maturity, and the accidental crises

⁴Ibid., p. 117.

to which every man is vulnerable.

Christmas is, then, a time of hope and inspires hope, for mother-nature's light emerges with new freshness and strength, with affirming reliability, and with a coherence which verifies trust and faith. Hope is the ontogenetic basis of faith, and it is nourished by the adult faith which pervades patterns of care.

Erikson chances the formulation of a definition of hope:

Hope is the enduring belief in the attainability of fervent wishes, in spite of the dark urges and rages which mark the beginning of existence.⁵

Yet even in relationship to such a mother it is mentioned that the infant's existence begins with dark urges and rages, and fervent wishes. The essence of the crisis of the oral stage consists of these deep and intense dynamics.

II. THE PSYCHODYNAMICS OF THE ORAL STAGE

All understanding of psychological phenomena rests on Freud's discovery of the dynamic Unconscious. In his thought the two primary instincts of life and death (Eros and Thanatos)--revealed in sexuality and aggression--are the source of all mental energy, and all mental processes start from an unconscious stage.

Freud's concept of an inherent antithesis (needing

⁵Ibid., p. 118.

synthesis or resolution) in the deepest and most dynamic levels of the mind are fully borne out by the work of Melanie Klein and her associates.⁶ She sees unconscious fantasies--the mental facet of the instinctual urges--as being a component of the life of the psyche from birth through death. In the infant such fantasies are associated with the experience of pleasure and pain, happiness and anxiety, and involve his relation with his objects.

The first childhood period is characterized by the infant's maximal dependence on his mother and by the maximal immaturity of his ego. The infant's fairly well-developed sensory nervous system makes the pain of his instinctual tensions felt, but his relatively undeveloped motor nervous system leaves him incapable of relieving himself of these tensions. When the instinctual tension manifests itself in the child and when the environment, in the form of the mother or mothering-person, meets the demand with indifference, with refusal, with annoyance, with threats, or with punishment, that painful state has to find some more direct method of expression or he has to endure the tension: he may just have to suffer hunger, loneliness, or the discomfort of lying too long in one place.

If the child is required to deal with too much pain

⁶See Paula Heimann, "A Contribution to the Re-Evaluation of the Oedipus Complex," in Melanie Klein, et. al., New Directions in Psychoanalysis (New York: Basic Books, 1957), p. 23.

and loneliness by himself and he fails to develop that most necessary psychic function of being able to relate to and use the warmth and friendliness of others. These attitudes on the part of the upbringers tend to give children the impression that they are alone in the world, that they are likely to be neglected, that their needs will probably not be met anyway. They then lack the sense of basic trust, are pessimistic, and lack in the sustaining quality of hope as an inner foundation.

The instinctual urges and the fantasies which they imply reign supreme. Perception of the reality of the self and of object is poor: he makes no distinction between himself and others. From his perspective he is the universe: he is the "good" mother by whom he is fed, and the "bad" mother who frustrates or deprives. At this point the infant "lives through and loves with his mouth; and the mother lives through and loves with her breasts,"⁷ even though, in the beginning, mother is an "extension" of himself.

In states of hunger or pain, he attempts to split the good (satisfying) from the bad (frustrating) breast--an impossible task for they are one and the same. The result is unintegrated and conflicting attitudes to the vital objects of his world. These same dynamics are seen

⁷Erik Erikson, "Identity and the Life Cycle," Psychological Issues, 1:1 (1959), 57.

in the schizoid and schizophrenic illnesses: an artificial and disintegrating split of "good" and "bad." Splitting mechanisms are amongst the most primitive ego defenses. Love (of the "good" breast), hate (of the "bad" breast), and fear of persecution (pain) are thus fundamental units of psychological experience originating in the unconscious fantasies of infancy.

As the infant's ego becomes stronger and more coherent he begins to realize that when he loves and hates his mother, it is one and the same person whom he desires and attacks. The conflict of ambivalence begins to play its part in emotional life. The infant feels guilty and depressed, for he suffers from the pain which his destructive impulses inflict on her, and he fears that he will lose her.

Hatred against the loved object matters so much, because at this stage the belief in the omnipotence of evil outweighs the belief in the power of love.⁸

If the "bad", "persecutory" object (mother) is not too bad--if her love and loving is reliable and coherent, the child will learn to maintain a balance between his love and his rage, and basic trust and hope emerge as a result of the balance. If, however, frustration and deprivation are excessive the ego will not be able to work through the depression and objects will remain split into

⁸Ibid., p. 25.

good ones and bad ones, and the person develops with such a black-white, either-or attitude toward life. The fear and hatred of the "bad" enfeebles Hope, for rather than resolution and integration there occurs splitting and disintegration. "Good" becomes idealized and "bad" exaggerated, with the denial that the "bad" was ever good or has any possibility of goodness. In his fear and hatred, he may tend to call bad "good", and good "bad", a characteristic found often in later adult life.⁹

Oral impulses are essentially connected with an inward direction--are receptive. The oral zone is the focus of the first mode of approach to the external environment, that of incorporation. The infant is willing and able to suck on appropriate objects, to swallow whatever appropriate fluids they emit, and is soon also willing and able to "take in" with his eyes what enters his visual field. In the beginning, however, incorporation is almost exclusively oral and is the earliest mode of relationship with other people. Through incorporation one feels himself to be at one with the person with whom he is in interaction, and is unaware of any sense of separateness between his

⁹Sexuality, for example, is called "bad" whereas asceticism and/or celibacy is called "good", but with destructive consequences--neurosis, psychosis. Another example might be those who approach Christmas with the "bah, humbug" attitude.

personality and that of the other.¹⁰

He equates interpersonal relatedness with a process of engulfment, in which his personality is in the process of devouring or being devoured by the personality of the other participant in the interaction.¹¹

By incorporating objects one becomes united with them, and incorporation is a primary way of identification.¹² The ideas of eating an object or of being eaten by an object remain the ways in which any reunion with objects is thought of unconsciously. There is, in man, not only a longing to incorporate objects but also a longing to be incorporated by a larger object. "The seemingly contradictory aims of eating and being eaten appear condensed with each other The idea of being eaten (incorporated) is not only a source of fear but under certain circumstances may also be a source of oral pleasure.¹³ In fact, however, such incorporating and incorporation (union) is destructive of objects (and identities) with the result that such aims always have a negative side (aggression, hostility). The incorporation mode of interaction decreases in intensity and frequency as the child matures, although it remains

¹⁰This process is relevant to Holy Communion and Baptism. See Part III.

¹¹H. Searles, "Data Concerning Certain Manifestations of Incorporation," Psychiatry, XIV:4 (November 1951), 397.

¹²See Otto Fenichel, The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis (New York: Norton, 1945), p. 63.

¹³Ibid., p. 64.

forever as an active dimension of his psychic structure.

There is a high premium of libidinal pleasure in the oral dynamics. The pleasure gained from the breast or bottle is based on not along on the gratification of hunger but on the stimulation of the erogenous oral mucus membrane as well. Thumbsucking shows this well: the thumb produces no milk. Oral eroticism is retained in the adult in many ways: kissing, drinking and smoking, and in many eating habits. The aim of oral eroticism is first the pleasurable erotic stimulation of the erogenous zones, and later the incorporation of objects.

There is a second stage of the "oral phase" beginning with the development of teeth and the pleasure of biting on hard things, in biting through things, and in biting pieces off things. Erikson points out that, at this stage, the baby undergoes a severely traumatic change, from which even the kindest environment cannot save him. He describes it in terms of the development of impulses and mechanisms of taking hold and grasping objects, the eruption of the teeth and the proximity of this process to that of weaning and to increasing separation from the mother.

For it is here that "good" and "evil" enter the baby's world, unless his faith in himself and others has already been shaken in the first stage by unduly provoked or prolonged paroxysms of rage and exhaustion (cf. above re: "bad" breast).¹⁴

¹⁴Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society (New York: Norton, 1950), p. 74.

The teeth "bore from within"--in the very oral cavity which until then was the main seat of pleasure. The fact that the tension and pain caused by the teeth can be alleviated only by biting harder results in a kind of masochistic dilemma. And to this physical dilemma is added an interpersonal one, for where breast feeding lasts into the biting stage it is now necessary to learn how to suck without biting, so that the mother may not withdraw the nipple in pain or anger.

Our clinical work indicates that this point in the individual's early history is the origin of an evil dividedness, where anger against the gnawing teeth, and impotent anger all lead to a forceful experience of sadistic and masochistic confusion leaving the general impression that once upon a time one destroyed one's unity with a maternal matrix.¹⁵

This earliest catastrophe, as Erikson calls it, in the individual's relation to himself and to the world is well symbolized in the biblical saga of paradise, where the first people on earth, the new born, forfeited forever the right to pluck without effort what had been put at their disposal; they bit into the forbidden apple, and made God angry.

Even under the most favorable circumstances, this stage leaves a residue of a primary sense of evil and doom (threatened loss of love) and of a universal nostalgia for a lost paradise--the tensionless Nirvana of the satisfied

¹⁵Ibid.

infant resting at the mother's breast.

The oral stages then, form in the infant the springs of the basic sense of trust and the basic sense of evil which remain the source of primal anxiety and of primal hope throughout life.

The sense of basic trust implies that one has learned to rely on the sameness and continuity of the outer providers, assuming that there has been a continuity of provision by a coherent, loving provider, but also that one may trust oneself and the capacity of one's own organs to cope with urges and angers; that one is able to consider himself trustworthy. It is a lasting attitude toward oneself and the universe.

In adults the impairment of basic trust is expressed in a basic mistrust. It characterizes individuals who withdraw into themselves in particular ways when at odds with themselves and with others. Erikson's comment with regard to assisting these persons defines well an essential function of the church. We must try to reach them again in specific ways in order to convince them that they can trust the world and that they can trust themselves--by providing them with a trustworthy environment.

It is against the combination of the impressions of having been deprived and persecuted, of having been divided, and of having been abandoned, all of which leave a residue of basic mistrust, that basic trust must be

established and maintained. The amount of trust derived from these early experiences does not seem to depend on absolute quantities of food or demonstrations of love but rather on the quality of the maternal relationship.

In mental development the progress to a higher level never takes place completely; instead characteristics of the earlier levels persist alongside of or behind the new level to some extent. When a development meets with difficulties, there may be backward movements in which the psyche recedes to earlier stages that were more successfully experienced. The retaining of more characteristics of earlier stages than is normal is called "fixation." In ego fixation or ego regressions an earlier level of ego development persists or returns. Oral fixations and regression are abundantly evident in the moods and behaviors of man at Christmas. They need to be understood, however, as an individual's way of coping with the vicissitudes of life.

"There may be fixations at the earlier love levels, with aims of incorporation, or at the types of self-esteem regulation characteristic of small children."¹⁶ Evidence of incorporation aims are abundant (eating and drinking heavily, and so on) as is evidence of such regulation of self-esteem. This type of self-esteem is not founded on real achievements or values, but on being loved, supported

¹⁶Fenichel, op. cit., p. 53.

and encouraged.¹⁷

If the individual experiences an excessive amount of satisfactions at a given level that level will be renounced only with reluctance and there will always be a yearning for the satisfaction formerly enjoyed, especially in situations of stress. Overindulgence can make a person unable to bear later frustrations. Excessive frustration at a given level results in a kind of refusal by the organism to go further, demanding the withheld satisfactions. Psychic fixations are most frequently rooted in experiences of instinctual satisfaction which simultaneously gave reassurance in the face of some anxiety (e.g., the threat of abandonment) or aided in repressing some other feared impulse (e.g., oral aggression).

It is, then, in the satisfaction and frustration of instinctual needs, in the love and hostility of the oral stage that trust and hope have their beginnings. Enfeebled hope and basic mistrust are representative of disturbed, unresolved oral crises, and indicate a deep uneasiness and anxiety in the individual. Confrontation with birth and these first months of life, implicit in the celebration of Christmas intensifies such anxiety and accounts for so much of the behavior and mood of people during the holiday. Regression to oral behavior in celebrating Christmas may

¹⁷S. Rado, "The Problem of Melancholia," International Journal of Psychoanalysis, IX:9 (1928), 632.

aid in the satisfaction of unconscious impulses and achievement of a sense of security.

III. THE BEHAVIORS AND MOODS OF CHRISTMAS: ORAL PSYCHODYNAMICS

Impaired trust of others and oneself makes for difficulties in establishing close emotional ties, and often results in a person's feeling isolated, alone and bored, with an inclination to frequent self-evaluation in a derogatory sense. The Christmas holiday has a sensitizing effect on these individuals who receive little or no affection or who cannot accept that which is offered. The holiday experience of these people is characterized by the presence of diffuse anxiety, feelings of helplessness, possessiveness and irritability, nostalgia or bitter rumination about the holiday experiences of youth, depressive affect and a wish for magical resolution of problems.

James Cattell describes this reaction as the "Holiday Syndrome" and sees it as an exaggeration of an individual's underlying pattern.¹⁸ It usually occurs in those who have few or no well-established emotional relationships outside the family, and a very ambivalent relationship with the present family. There is a feeling of being unloved, unwanted and not belonging to any family group. Various

¹⁸James P. Cattell, "The Holiday Syndrome," Psycho-analytic Review, XLII (1955), 40.

efforts may be made, usually on a juvenile level, to establish oneself as a family member or to force recognition of dependent needs. But the idea that one is a helpless, rejected child becomes a dominating concept and further rejection is often invited. The person who stops in for a cup of coffee and then says on and on until politely asked to leave will think of himself as having been rejected, and will feel unloved and unwanted. Such a person may complain that no one loves him, but then defiantly decline an invitation from family surrogates as "charity" and state that he will eat in the Automat with the other outcasts.

This is often an underlining of masochistic, self-commiseration blended with an urge to find even more pitiable, helpless characters than oneself. There is a partially conscious recognition of the fear that the present tenuous relationships will be further disrupted and some awareness of strong guilt that one's childhood function in the original family somehow brought about . . . disruption of the family (and/or of the relationship with the mother). The subsequent suffering may be seen as justified punishment and atonement.¹⁹

Such behavior and thought can be understood within the framework of the dynamics of the first year of life at which point the person is fixated because of either excessive satisfaction or frustration. Repressed oral instincts are repeatedly brought to the surface at Christmas, but so too are oral anxiety and depression and characteristic defenses against these affects.

The Christmas holiday is a time of recreation, in

¹⁹Ibid.

the denotive sense, physically, emotionally, spiritually, as well as a time of re-evaluation of one's relationship to oneself, family, the past and future, and to God. There is a paradoxical emphasis on conforming obedience, special expression of interest, tenderness and belonging on the one hand, with unusual license and magical expectations on the other. All of this carries a tremendous emotional impact and nurtures regressive behavior in those who lack in resolution of basic inner conflicts. Healthier (integrated) persons are able to respond actively and achieve a satisfying experience of recreation without negative reverberations. They can pursue pleasure yet maintain reality-linkage for practical purposes. The others, often victims of the Holiday Syndrome, are inclined to regress more profoundly and in a stereotyped manner, to revive anachronistic experiences and patterns of childhood or their response to these. "The most important determining factors in this type of reaction would seem to be the individual's basic potential for integration and his response in early family relationships and early environmental vicissitudes."²⁰

Oral erotic and incorporative impulses are obviously acted-out and gratified in the common, expected and rationalized consumption of vast quantities of candies, baked goods, and alcohol. It is as though mother's sweet, warm milk,

²⁰Ibid., p. 42.

and the lost paradise at her breast is regressively sought again. These orally dependent characters may find their needs all the more intensified at Christmas: the union of mother and child in the Madonna images, the emphasis on warm, intimate relationships, stimulate their emotional hunger. Such dependency is always ambivalent, however, the loving wishes accompanied by the hostile rages, and this ambivalence too is intensified at Christmas. But the anxiety and fear and depression may be temporarily diminished by the toxic effects of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. The wished for changes in the balance of instinctual conflicts may be produced by the chemical means of the toxins. These changes diminish inhibitions, heighten self-esteem, and ward off anxiety, at least for a short time and to a certain extent.²¹

In the previous chapter it was pointed out that some of the anxiety, tension, and depression at Christmas may stem from one's fear of death which is associated with separation. Certainly one of the ways of overcoming such separation is to be united with one's love object. The oral experience in nursing, in the pre-object stage, was one of incorporating and identifying with the gratifying breast. Obsessive, compulsive, almost greedy ingestion of sweets and drink at Christmas may be seen as a regressive attempt

²¹See Fenichel, op. cit., p. 63.

to accomplish fulfillment of such unconscious wishes (see Chapter IV, discussion on Holy Communion).

What other moods and behaviors at Christmas are there that serve as defenses against the anxiety of unconscious, oral impulses? Certainly one of the first things that comes to mind in describing the mood and behavior of people at Christmas is their sense of joy. At first glance it seems to be a positive, healthy, genuine emotion, most appropriate in the spirit of Christmas. But let us take another look. Is the joy of people, both children and adults, at Christmas time really genuine?

In "The Santa Claus Custom,"²² Renzo Sereno associates the joy of children, especially on Christmas morning, with relief. He discusses the fact that children are often involved in the Santa Claus practice against their will; that gifts are given against a pledge of good behavior, and that they are in the nature more of a bribe or a prize than of a spontaneous donation; that many see no reason for disclosing their wishes to a stranger who, for unexplained reasons, has so much power over them; that Santa, as well as many of the presents, are foisted on the children by parents for their own gratification and purposes; that the deception carried on by adults stems from their insecurities and fears; that instead of letting their love flow, the

²²Sereno, op. cit., pp. 387-395.

parents attempt to strike a bargain--to gain a pledge of good behavior. He comments that such an unreasonable and forced pledge is naturally a well-spring of hostility, and that the bargain is an admission of parental distance and remoteness. "Instead of the child's being invited to abandon himself to his love for his parents without conditions and without time limits, the child is asked to please placate a stranger whose power, though limited in time, is presented as absolute.²³ These elements of insecurity, which are subconscious in the adults, do not escape the child, even if he is not clearly aware of such processes.

The acute misery of the children is rendered visible by the joy with which they greet Christmas morning, when the person of Santa is out of the picture and the children can face whatever objects they have been given without having to pretend, protest, or promise. The joy of the morning is actually a sense of relief. Santa--not unlike an ogre or a warlock, but rendered even more unpleasant by the nonconsequential behavior he causes in the adults--is way for another year. The constant feeling of being swindled, or cheated, or lied to by the parents is finally abated.²⁴

Sereno is quite negative about the whole Santa Claus tradition. It is not, however, against the mythical Christmas figure that he reacts but against the customary use made of Santa Claus. The restrictions and inhibitions of love and the consequent frustrations that he describes are all characteristic of the "oral" dynamics. The two cartoons

²³Ibid., p. 390.

²⁴Ibid.

clipped from newspapers during the month of December, 1966, confirm his evaluation (Figure I, p. 125).

In other instances, however, Christmas morning brings disappointment and anxiety to both children and adults, because the gifts, and the ceremony, appear shorn of the magic which had been expected.

Since the magic is an interpersonal relationship, the disappointment affects both children and adults, though the frustration and the efforts at disguising it assume different forms.

Thus motivations for such celebrations must be sought entirely in adult needs

What the child, like a mature adult, would love most in a gift is the token value, the fact that it is a concrete instance of love. In the case of parental love, such presents have for the child an almost transcendental value. If the presents are brought by Santa, they lose most of the grace they would have as gifts from the parents . . . The child may not believe in Santa Claus, but the complicity of the parents in the agreement about gifts and behavior forces him into a contract to be observed ad litteram. He begins to nourish doubts about the love of his parents, and resents being obligated to a mythical ludicrous stranger, rather than being tied by love to those whom he loves most.²⁵

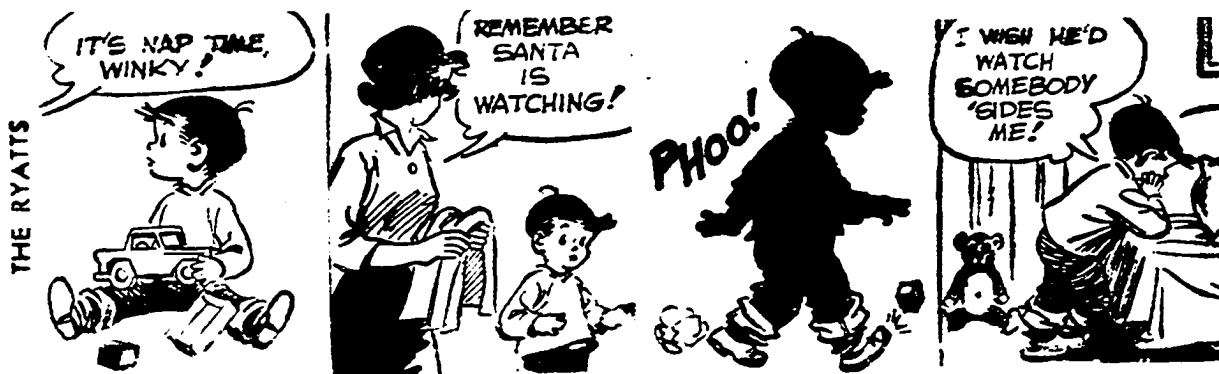
Sereno presents some "food for thought", though the effects of Santa Claus need not, necessarily, be so negative as he presents. Such consequences would be dependent upon the use and meaning of Santa Claus to the parents. Also, and perhaps of greater importance, such effects upon children would have direct associations with the nature of the child's experience during his oral stage and his resolution of the inherent conflicts. If the mother-child

²⁵Ibid.

FIGURE I
CARPONS REGARDING CHILDREN
AND SANTA CLAUS



"Well—what big fat promises are you
going to make THIS year?"



The Whittier (California) Daily News, December 7 and
11, 1966.

relationship was of such a quality that inspired hope and instilled a sense of basic trust then probably Santa Claus would not have such negative consequences.

In a relationship of that quality the child's ego is supported and nourished as it attempts to integrate the conflicts of the impulses, loving and hateful, of the first year of life. The positive then, well balances the negative and provides a foundation which prevents the person from falling-apart from anxiety or sinking in depression.

It remains a possibility, however, that the joy of the child may be more a sense of relief than a genuine happiness. What about the joy of the adult? Can it be a defense, or a resistance, or a "manifest element" that needs analyzing? When we think of joy, we think of elation, ecstasy, mania, or perhaps of happiness, fulfillment, or, as Paul Tillich says, blessedness.²⁶ The answer is "yes", joy can be a defense, and not a state of blessedness. "Joy" as blessedness will be discussed in the following chapter; let us look now into "joy" a mechanism used to ward off anxiety and/or depression.

Bertram Lewin, a psychoanalyst and author of The Psychoanalysis of Elation, points out that elation, like depression, has its roots in oral eroticism, and that incorporation and identification play a large role in both

²⁶Paul Tillich, "The Meaning of Joy," in his The New Being (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. 150.

states.²⁷ The depression experienced at Christmas, as at other times of the year, may be the first step toward the severe depressions the orally dependent individual gets when the vital supplies of "nourishment" he feels he needs to maintain his self-esteem are withdrawn. Such a person is called a "love addict" by Fenichel, persons unable to love actively, who passively need to feel loved. "Without giving any consideration to the feelings of their fellow men they demand of them an understanding of their own feelings. They are always bent upon establishing a "good understanding" with people, though they are unable to fulfill their own part of such an understanding; this need compels them to attempt to deny their ever present readiness to react hostilely."²⁸ Hostility is always a factor in depression, but it is hostility which has been turned against one's own ego. The self-hatred sometimes appears in the form of a sense of guilt. Freud's understanding of this was that the depressed patient has incorporated and introjected the "lost" love object, has taken it into himself, and has altered his own ego in so doing. He wrote in Mourning and Melancholia (1915) that if one attended to the self-reproaches in the depressions he would see that

²⁷Bertram Lewin, The Psychoanalysis of Elation (New York: Norton, 1950), p. 18.

²⁸Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in his The Complete Psychological Works (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), XIV, 248.

they did not particularly fit the patient but "that with insignificant modifications they do fit someone else, someone whom the patient loves or has loved or should love."²⁹ The patients seemed to be punishing their lost objects in effigy, but their own ego is the effigy. These same dynamics apply to the event of suicide motivated by the unconscious wish to kill. Lewin writes that it is the hunger pains in the infant, which are the sequels of rage, that are the precursors and prototypes of later self-punishments (also cf. Erikson, above, p. 113).³⁰

Hence, the hunger situation is the deepest point of fixation in the depressions, a model for later "threatened" loss of love.

The depressed person is as ambivalent toward himself as he is toward others. But the two components of the ambivalence are structured, or stratified differently. In relation to the loved person, the love impulses (or at least the impulses toward being loved) are more manifest, while the hate is hidden (unconscious or subconscious). In relation to his own ego it is the hate that becomes vociferous, while the primary narcissistic overestimation of the ego remains concealed. Analysis frequently reveals that the depressed patient often behaves very arrogantly and inflicts himself upon his objects; in reality, though

²⁹Lewin, op. cit., p. 27.

³⁰Ibid., p. 36.

unconsciously, his self-love is excessive.

Let us, then, lift up a few salient points regarding depression; (1) depression occurs in response to loss of self-esteem, which occurs (2) with the feeling "nobody loves me" when (3) the narcissistic needs of one's dependency are not being sufficiently (which may be inappropriately excessive) met. It is an intrapsychic process basically, even though stimulated by some external event. Hostility is always a factor, though it has been turned against the person's own ego (or super-ego) rather than directed at its object, who is one and the same love object upon whom the person is dependent. Through the psychic process of incorporation an identification with the object is accomplished, but the union (re-union) forever remains ambivalent.

In the illness known as Manic-Depressive psychosis an interesting psychic function occurs; there is an immense increase in self-esteem which forms the center of all manic phenomena, with what appears to be a decrease in conscience. What the depression was striving for seems to be achieved in the mania; not only narcissistic supplies, which again make life desirable, but a total narcissistic victory is at hand. The primary narcissistic omnipotence (the oral infant who believes the feeding breast is his own) is more or less regained and life is felt to be incredibly intensified.

It has been demonstrated that the elevated moods,

the elations, or ecstasies (obvious in mania) do serve the purpose of denying aggression. Among the writers on elation, Helene Deutsch was especially impressed by the importance of denial as a defense mechanism. She stated that denial was the basic defense mechanism in hypomania, and that it played a role there as important as reaction-formation in the obsessional neuroses, projection in the phobias, or introjection in the depressions.³¹ Denial disclaims the external world as repression disclaims the instincts. Freud wrote in An Outline of Psychoanalysis³² that the "infantile ego . . . often finds itself in the position of warding off some claim from the external world which it feels as painful, and that this is effected by denying the perceptions that bring to knowledge such a demand on the part of reality."³³ Denial of reality (external) is accomplished then, by denial of the internal (reality) perceptions which would bring something painful into awareness.

There are other defense mechanisms, to be sure, in the elations (projection and identification), but it is chiefly this aspect of denial which influences the clinical picture.

³¹Helen Deutsch, "Zur Psychologie der manisch-depressiven Zustände, insbesondere der chronischen Hypomanie," Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalysis, XIX (1933), cited by Lewin, op. cit., p. 52.

³²Sigmund Freud, An Outline of Psychoanalysis (New York: Norton, 1949), pp. 118-119.

³³Lewin, op. cit., p. 52.

A glance at most manic histories, as they appear in an ordinary hospital report, will show that manic attack is a denial of just such precipitating situations as we have come, in psychoanalysis, to regard as revivers of childhood conflicts and frustrations. Prominent among the precipitants of manic attacks is child-birth, a fact to which psychiatrists often attribute the statistically higher incidence of women, among the manic-depressive patients.³⁴ (Underline supplied.)

The puerperal manias are usual excited affirmations of virginity and denials of marriage, motherhood, and they readily permit inferences as to the unconscious conflicts even without psychoanalysis.

In children both normal and neurotic denial is accomplished in fantasies; the child easily denies realities that surround it. Anna Freud remarks that in childhood denial through fantasy ordinarily has no lasting effect. Continued into latency, however, it may lead to general alterations of character such as lying or exaggeration.³⁵

Elation may be a defense against aggression, but mania and manic behavior also serves as a discharge for hostile strivings.

In many respects the behavior preceding Christmas is quite manic--there is high excitement, intense activity, and what often appears to be impulsive freedom. People rush, sing, laugh, buy this and do that, "because its Christmas," without the restraint they might exercise at

³⁴Ibid., p. 61.

³⁵Anna Freud, The Ego and Mechanisms of Defense (New York: International Universities Press, 1946), pp. 73-99.

other times of the year. Those persons who are predisposed to depression may be able to ward it off in such manic activity, but then feel the depression Christmas afternoon, after "it's all over." These same persons can, however, return to the manic defense by rushing to the post-Christmas sales.

The dynamics of elation and mania indicate the psychic de-differentiation between the ego and the super-ego. In effect super-ego prohibitions of conscience and the ego-ideal are (temporarily) undone. Writing in Group Psychology and The Analysis of The Ego, Freud suggests that, in the final analysis, such "release" of the super-ego may be a biological necessity which accounts for the carnivals, feasts, Saturnalia and other festivals in man's history.³⁶ All differentiations in the psychic apparatus may need a temporary abolition from time to time. In sleep, the ego is submerged nightly into the id from which it arose. Similarly, in festivals and in mania the super-ego may be drawn back into the ego.

In all societies the institution of "festivals" is found, that is, of occasions when superego prohibitions are periodically undone. Institutions of this kind are certainly based on a social necessity. Any society that creates chronic dissatisfaction in its members needs institutions through which the dammed-up tendencies toward rebellion may be "channelized"; through them a form of discharge of strivings hostile to existing institutions is provided, which entails the

³⁶ Sigmund Freud, Group Psychology and The Analysis of The Ego (London: Hogarth Press, 1948), p. 105.

least possible injury to these institutions. Once a year, under ceremonial guarantees, under specified conditions, and in an institutionalized way, rebellious impulses are permitted to express themselves. From time to time the "superego is abolished"; this creates a good mood in them and enables them to obey for another year.³⁷

The rebellion and hostility of Christmas was more obvious a dimension of the celebration in its historical past, as was revealed in Part I. But such rebellion and hostility remain significant elements in Christmas celebration of contemporary times, seen in the licentiousness of the Christmas office party and New Year's eve celebrations, in the custom of the mistletoe, and less obviously in the depression and elation prevalent during the holiday.

In spite of the apparent "carefreeness," the exaggerated manner of manic expressions does not give the impression of genuine freedom. Fenichel points out that actually, the analysis of a mania shows that the patient's fears of his super-ego as a rule are not entirely overcome. Unconsciously they are still effective, and the manifestations of mania are in actuality a reaction-formation in that they serve the purpose of denying opposite attitudes. The mania is not a genuine freedom from depression but a cramped denial of dependencies. The liberation is frequently a pretended one.³⁸

³⁷Fenichel, op. cit., pp. 408-409.

³⁸Ibid., p. 410.

The behavior of many people during the Christmas holiday can be well described as Manic-reactions. The oral behavior and elation, the abandonment of reason and impulsive acting-out, the narcissistic indulgence of one's self are all characteristic. The process, intrapsychically, is that of the "reproduction of that fusion with the breast which takes place at nursing."³⁹ Some of the elation and joy at Christmas may, then, have its own intrinsic sense of reality, which is a reliving of a memory (unconscious) of the originally satisfying nursing experience. The happy mood of the manic patient, and perhaps of the person celebrating Christmas, is a repetition, subjectively valid and real to the one who experiences it because it relives a primary, real, happy feeling, accompanied through denial and repression of hostile impulses.

The last phenomena characteristic of Christmas (and other feast-days) to be discussed in this section is that of sleepiness. People often comment about being sleepy Christmas afternoon or the day after Christmas. In terms of the psychic processes this too has its roots in the nursing experience. "In going to sleep, as many have remarked, the ego repeats a process like the first infantile falling asleep, a fusion with the breast at nursing."⁴⁰

³⁹Rado, op. cit., cited in Lewin, op. cit., p. 82.

⁴⁰Lewin, op. cit., p. 82.

Sleeping basically comes from oral satisfaction. In insomnia, the problem of going to sleep is expressed in oral terms. The person manifests a continued hunger of one sort or another; the devices hit upon to induce sleep have a direct or symbolic oral significance (drinking milk, using sedatives, reading [incorporation]).

An important dimension of insomnia is the unconscious fear of being eaten (devoured) and dying. Along with the idea of devouring goes the idea of being devoured and of going to sleep. The unconscious wish to be devoured, which would accomplish the overcoming of separation in union, yet at the same time would mean death, reminds one of and perhaps explains the analyst's description of people "rushing off to drown themselves in a sea of expensive gifts." The fact that gifts have oral (food) associations has already been described; and the fact that the sea is a common symbol for the mother is well known.⁴¹

Christmas sleepiness does not mean, necessarily, that Christmas has been satisfying and nourishing. Sleep is often used as a form of escape, or more specifically as a defense against unpleasant, anxiety-provoking stimuli.⁴² When the wish to sleep or to stay asleep is a defense,

⁴¹J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962), p. 268.

⁴²C. Davidson, "Psychosocial and Psychodynamic Aspects of Disturbances of Sleep," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, XIV (1945), 210.

however, it is connected in the unconscious with memories of the earliest falling asleep at the breast.

Analysis of disturbance in some interpersonal relations, of eating, drinking, and partying behavior, of joy and depression, and of sleepiness reveals, then, that these behaviors and moods of Christmas ultimately, and unconsciously, have their roots in individual's first year of life. Sexual (libidinal) and aggressive instincts which conflict with one another in these early months and remain as potential threats throughout life, are the raw material out of which emerges the psychosocial attitudes of basic trust and mistrust. The intrapsychic dynamics and the interpersonal dynamics together provide the soil in which hope is rooted. These two dimensions of experience, intrapersonal and social, and the quality of strength (virtue) emerging from their conflicts, are all confronted at an oral level in the celebration of Christmas. Oral eroticism, oral fear, and oral hostility are all stimulated in the myth, rite, and celebration of the festival, and each leads to its own characteristic pattern of defense and/or satisfaction.

CHAPTER III

THE EMERGENCE OF WILL

As the individual develops physically and mentally he engages in the inevitable struggle over inner and outer control--self-control versus other-control. This struggle becomes focused on the training of the eliminative sphincters during toilet training. Out of this struggle emerges the virtue Will as the person gradually gains the power of increased judgment and decision in the application of drive. A sense of defeat can develop from either too little or too much training and can lead to deep shame and compulsive doubt about one's self. It is in the growth of will that the social expression of "good will" develops, for "good will" is dependent upon the mutual limitation of wills.

There is an erotic dimension in anal functions just as there is libidinal pleasure in oral functions. Pleasure is derived from both excreting and retaining, and these dynamics can be fixation points in personality development. "Anal characters" are obsessive, compulsive, controlling and manipulative persons. Both the "Scrooge" and the "messy slob" reveal anal stage dynamics.

In the process of toilet training basic feelings of goodness and badness are established, for there is an ego investment (identification) in the feces--if they are

considered "bad" the child may feel he is bad; if "good", likewise. From the inner sense of goodness emanates autonomy and pride; from the sense of badness, doubt and shame.

In the development of control over one's excretory functions the individual also gains a means of control over his environment. He can, for example, please his mother, upset her, frustrate her, enrage her, make her feel helpless and a failure. But he also experiences these feelings in response to the control which is exercised by his environment, and thus the anal stage is one in which ambivalence is inevitable: the child both loves and hates himself and his environment.

These processes, behaviors, and feelings are discussed in the first two sections of this chapter. Anal dynamics are then discussed as being intrinsic to some of the behaviors and moods at Christmas.

I. WILL: AN INDISPENSABLE VIRTUE

Excessive satisfaction, as well as excessive deprivation, is an important determinant of fixation at a certain stage of personality development. In discussing the establishment of hope it was emphasized that the infant needs the pleasure of sucking, the ingestion of good food, and consistency of care if he is to develop a basic sense of trust and a foundation of hope. People with such gratifying oral histories tend to be optimistic individuals, but some

are maladaptively so: their attitude is often one that someone will always be there to help them, that they do not really have to worry. Hope, and the concomitant factors of the oral stage, are extremely important, but an exclusive condition of hopefulness, translated into various imaginable worlds, would be a paradise in nature, a Utopia in social reality, and a heaven in the beyond. Paradise in nature and Utopia in social reality may be beautiful ideals, but would only be possible at the expense of reality. True hope leads, not to Utopia, but inexorably into conflicts between the rapidly developing self-will and the will of others. It is from this conflict that the rudiments of will emerge. As the infant's senses and muscles grasp at opportunities for more active experience, he faces the double demand for self-control and for the acceptance of control from others. "To will does not mean to be willful, but rather to gain gradually the power of increased judgment and decision in the application of drive. Man must learn to will what he can be, to renounce as not worth willing what cannot be, and to believe he has willed what is inevitable."¹

No person can live, no ego remain intact, without

¹Erik Erikson, Insight and Responsibility (New York: Norton, 1964), p. 118. Erikson also states that the genetic origin of the elusive question of Free Will, which man, ever again, attempts to master logically and theologically is in the anal stage of development.

hope and will.

The rudiments of will are acquired as the ego unifies experiences on fronts seemingly remote from one another: awareness and attention, manipulation, verbalization, and locomotion. The struggle over inner and outer control which resides in the whole muscle system becomes centered in the training of the eliminative sphincters during the second year of life when individual coordination and social guidance seek mutual aims. A sense of defeat, which can develop from either too little or too much training, can lead to deep shame about himself, and a compulsive doubt whether he ever really willed what he did, or really did what he willed. Once will, however, is built securely into the early development of the ego it survives, as hope does, the evidences of its limited potency--its finitude. For the maturing individual gradually incorporates a knowledge of what is expectable in life and what he (and others) can expect of himself. Even though frequently defeated, he nevertheless learns to accept the existential paradox of making decisions which he knows "deep down" will be predetermined by events, because making decisions is part of the evaluative quality inherent in being alive.

Ego strength depends, above all, on the sense of having done one's active part in the chain of the inevitable. And as it is with lesser hopes, so it is with small wills (if the word is permitted). They do not really seem worth despairing over when the moment of testing arrives, provided only that growth and development have enough leeway to present new issues, and that, all in all, expectable reality proves more

satisfactory and more interesting than fantasy.²

Will is the basis for the acceptance of law and necessity, and it is rooted in the judiciousness of parents guided by the spirit of law. Erikson formulates a definition of will.

Will, therefore, is the unbroken determination to exercise free choice as well as self-restraint, in spite of the unavoidable experience of shame and doubt in infancy.³

Will as a problem in interpersonal relationships is contained in the words "good will." The good will of others obviously depends on a mutual limitation of wills. It is during the second and third year that the child must yield to newcomers. Both honoring the privileges of the strong and protecting the rights of the weak is the task of judicious parents. Parents must gradually grant a measure of self-control to the child who learns to control willfulness, to offer willingness, and to exchange good will. "But in the end the self-image of the child will prove to have been split in the way in which man is apt to remain split for the rest of his life."⁴ For even as the ideal image of the loving mother brought with it the child's self-image as reflecting that mother's true recognition of the child as hers and as good, so does the ambivalently loved image of the controlling parent correspond to an ambivalently loved

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

self.

From here on, the able and the impotent, the loving and the angry, the unified and the self-contradictory selves will be part of man's equipment: truly a psychic fall from grace. In view of this inner split, only judicious parenthood, feeling itself part of a reasonably just civic and world order, can convey a healing sense of justice.⁵

The mutual limitation of wills intrinsic to "good will" is, then, dependent upon a resolution of ambivalence and a regulation of both positive and negative instinctual impulses. The degree of such instinct regulation and resolution determines the quality of the psychosocial of autonomy, shame and doubt. These factors are predominant in the psychodynamics of the anal stage.

II. THE PSYCHODYNAMICS OF THE ANAL STAGE

In delineating the organizational levels of the libido Freud discovered what he and the psychoanalysts call the anal-sadistic level.⁶ Anal pleasure, like oral pleasure (eroticism), is present from the beginning of life. However, in the second year of life the anal-erogenous zone seems to become the chief executive of all excitation which now, no matter where it originates, tends to be discharged through defecation. The primary aim of anal eroticism is the enjoyment of pleasurable sensations in excretions.

⁵Ibid., p. 120.

⁶Otto Fenichel, The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis (New York: Norton, 1945), p. 66.

Later experience teaches that pleasurable stimulation of the rectal mucosa may be increased by holding back the fecal mass.

Erikson points out that the whole procedure of evacuating the bowels and the bladder as completely as possible is also made pleasurable by a feeling of well-being which says, "Well done." Added to the libidinal pleasure, then, is the added evaluative judgment. "This feeling, at the beginning of life, must make up for quite frequent discomfort and tensions suffered as the bowels learn to do their daily work."⁷

Two developments gradually give these anal experiences the necessary volume: the arrival of better-formed stool and the general development of the muscle system which adds the dimension of voluntary release, of dropping and throwing away, to that of grasping appropriation. These two developments together suggest a greater ability to alternate withholding and expelling at will.

In contrast to some cultures where the parents ignore anal behavior our Western civilization has chosen to take the matter seriously. We assume that early and rigorous training not only keeps the home atmosphere "nicer" but is absolutely necessary for the development of orderliness and punctuality. Many people would question the

⁷Erikson, op. cit.

absoluteness of this assumption and encourage more relaxed, less rigorous training, recognizing the need for satisfying both the instinctual needs and the requirements of society. "There is no doubt, however, that the neurotics of our time include the compulsive type, who has more mechanical orderliness, punctuality, and thrift, and this in matters of affection as well as feces, than is good for him and, in the long run, for his society."⁸

The anal zone lends itself more than any other to the display of stubborn adherence to contradictory impulses. For one thing, it is the modal zone for two conflicting modes of approach, which must become alternating, namely retention and elimination. The sphincters are only part of the muscle system with its general duality of rigidity and relaxation. The development of the total muscle system gives the child a much greater power over the environment in the ability to reach out and hold on, to throw and to push away, to appropriate things and to keep them at a distance. Achievement of mastery is a dominant drive; primarily for mastery of his body, and secondarily to overcome the resistances that he encounters. He is ready to ride roughshod over anything that stands in the way of a wish. This whole stage, then, which the Germans called the stage of stubbornness, becomes, as Erikson describes it, a

⁸Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society (New York: Norton, 1950), p. 77.

battle for autonomy.

For, as he gets ready to stand more firmly on his feet the infant delineates his world as "I" and "you," "me" and "mine." Every mother knows how astonishingly pliable a child may be at this stage, if and when he has made the decision that he wants to do what he is supposed to do. It is hard, however, to find the proper formula for making him want to do just that. Every mother knows how lovingly a child at this stage will snuggle up and how ruthlessly he will suddenly try to push the adult away. At the same time the child is apt to both hoard things and to discard them, to cling to possessions and to throw them out of the window. All of these seemingly contradictory tendencies, then, we include under the formula of the retentive-eliminative modes.⁹

The new social modalities developed at this time, the antithesis of letting go and holding on, provide for the connection between anal and sadistic drives. The origin and character of the connection is analogous to the discussed connection between orality and sadism. It is due partly to frustrating influences and partly to the character of incorporation; the object of the first anal-sadistic action is the feces themselves, their "pinching off" being perceived as a kind of sadistic act; later on, persons are treated as the feces previously were treated. The second factor is that which is discussed above, the "social power" involved in the mastery of the sphincters: in training for cleanliness, the child finds opportunity effectively to express opposition against grown-ups.

The first anal strivings are autoerotic, and

⁹Ibid., p. 78.

pleasurable elimination as well as (later) pleasurable retention finds expression in many neurotic and superstitious remnants: for example, a person's feeling of power when he can retain or expell (spend) large quantities of money. The feces themselves become a libidinal object, even though they are the instruments by which pleasure of the stimulation of the rectal mucus membrane is achieved. They represent a thing which first is one's own body but which is transformed into an external object, the model of anything that may be lost or given; and thus they especially represent "possession," that is, things that are external but nevertheless have ego quality. Fenichel points out that anal-retention tendencies are a good example of the fusion of erogenous pleasure with security against anxiety.¹⁰ Thus the feces become an ambivalently-loved object. They are loved and held back or reintrojected (eaten) and played with, and they are hated or pinched off.

Conflicts aroused by the child's training toward cleanliness (which begins with potty-training) gradually turn the autoerotic anal strivings into object strivings. Then, objects may be treated exactly like feces. They may be retained (manipulated) or introjected (literally or in fantasy), as well as eliminated and pinched off. The training for cleanliness thus gives ample opportunity for

¹⁰Fenichel, op. cit., p. 66.

sensual and hostile gratifications. The anal object strivings are all ambivalently oriented: they may express tenderness in an archaic way, as well as, after their condemnation, hostility and contempt ("to play a dirty trick on somebody").¹¹

Erikson says that the matter of mutual regulation between mother and baby now faces its severest test. If outer control by too rigid or too early training insists on robbing the child of his attempt gradually to control his bowels and other ambivalent functions by his free choice he will be faced with a double rebellion and a double defeat.

Powerless in his own body (and often fearing his feces as if they were hostile monsters inhabiting his insides) and powerless outside, he will again be forced to seek satisfaction and control either by regression or by false progression. In other words, he will return to an earlier, oral control--i.e., by sucking his thumb and becoming whiny and demanding; or he will become hostile and intrusive, using his feces as ammunition and pretending an autonomy, an ability to do without anybody to lean on, which he has by no means really gained.¹²

What enduring qualities are rooted in this anal stage? From the sense of inner goodness emanates autonomy and pride; from the sense of badness, doubt and shame. To develop autonomy a firmly developed and convincingly continued state of early trust is necessary.

¹¹Ibid., p. 68.

¹²Erikson, Childhood and Society, p. 78.

The infant must come to feel that his basic faith in himself and in the world (which is the lasting treasure saved from the conflicts of the oral stage) will not be jeopardized by this sudden violent wish to have a choice, to appropriate demandingly and to eliminate stubbornly. Firmness must protect him against the potential anarchy of his as yet untrained judgment, his inability to hold on and to let go with discrimination. His environment must back him up in his wish to "stand on his own feet" lest he be overcome by that sense of having exposed himself prematurely and foolishly which we call shame, or that secondary mistrust, that looking back which we call doubt.¹³

The nuclear conflict, then, of this second stage of development is that between autonomy and shame and doubt. The ego's basic task is the resolution of this conflict. The same understanding firmness which provides for autonomy provides also for the emergence of the virtue called Will, and for the capacity for "good will." The infant who is sure he is loved will, in turn give love. "The consideration of the object's well-being, which constitutes love, probably starts in this . . . anal phase; its first manifestation is the readiness to sacrifice the feces for the object's sake."¹⁴

One of the first gifts the child has to offer his parents is a product of his creation and an extension of himself, his feces. How the gift is received, and how the infant is made to feel about his gift set the stage for all giving to follow. Christmas gift giving may then call

¹³Ibid., pp. 80-81.

¹⁴Fenichel, op. cit., p. 68.

forth these anal stage pleasures and displeasures, as well as the other dimensions of this period.

There is a variety of behaviors and thoughts which have anal associations. The anal stage is the dominant point of fixation in paranoia, obsessive compulsive disorders, and some conversion neuroses. Less disturbed persons give expression to anality--anal eroticism, anal fixation--in such behaviors as rigid scheduling and rigidity of thought, persistent obscenity, constipation, messiness. Some phobias have their roots there, and anality is an important dimension in homosexuality. A person's feelings about his body, his creativity, and his self-image as a "good" or a "bad" person have roots in this stage. In many homes cleanliness has a moral aspect; a dirty child is considered a wicked and bad child. The moral aspect of cleanliness has even been given theological overtones: "Cleanliness is next to Godliness." Our society has a great many attitudes concerning cleanliness, neatness, and the control of eliminations that are in conflict with the child's own instinctual tendencies. But he must begin to accept regulations, gain a certain control of himself with the help of others, and must begin to take certain responsibilities. The strength of self-regulation and the ability to be responsible are well-tested by the festivities of Christmas.

III. THE BEHAVIORS AND MOODS OF CHRISTMAS:

ANAL PSYCHODYNAMICS

The compulsive person, who has had to relinquish anal pleasure from fear of offending his mother (losing her love) can really have a heyday at Christmas. There is so much to be done and he can rather successfully organize his time and activities, keeping himself busy and getting everything done. Such compulsiveness is a defense against anxiety having to do with the outbreak of his own hostility and fear of rejection. Yet the compulsive person is also vulnerable at Christmas. The excited children may not cooperate in his ordered schedule of events; he might be delayed in the heavy traffic making him late for his next scheduled task; the mess of wrapping, and especially the mess of unwrapping presents may tax his tolerance. The "hoarding" of the ribbons and wrappings may be his only rescue from anxiety.

The person who has been successful in accomplishing a resolution of the conflicts during the anal stage is one who is able to exercise free-choice and self-restraint without feelings of doubt and shame. Certainly this matter of making choices and exercising self-restraint comes to the front during Christmas. The lack of self-restraint comes to the observer to be obvious, both in regard to purchasing gifts and in the ingestion of quantities of sweets and alcohol. There is often concern as to whether a gift will

please or be "good enough" for the recipient, and such concern may indicate the giver's own ambivalent self image. There is an investment of one's own ego in the gifts he gives (as earlier there was an ego quality in one's feces), and doubt about his own worth as a person makes him anxious about the worth of the gifts he gives. It may be that the practice of asking for gift lists has developed in defense against such anxiousness. Such a list would reassure the "giver" that what he "gives" will be well received.

The "good will" of Christmas certainly has its roots in this anal stage, and is concomitant with one's ability to exercise self-restraint. Yet much of the "good will" during the holiday is initiated and reinforced by cultural attitudes for it is the season of "good will" and to be a part, to belong, one must assume the attitudes of the societal family. This does not mean, necessarily, that the "good will" of an individual is not a genuine quality. But it does suggest that much of the "good will" may be an assumed quality achieved by the repression of other feelings and attitudes; particularly, hostility.

One of the ways of expressing good will at Christmas is through the practice of sending Christmas cards. Because of their relative low cost they are available to a great many people and can be used in large quantities. Certainly cards represent genuine affection, friendship, appreciation and/or intimacy, and are thus sent with such

sincerity. But cards may be sent for other reasons. "Popular Christmas cards also disclose many unconscious attitudes and predilections without wishing to do so, and thus perhaps with less distortion."¹⁵ Eric Berne comments on "negative" dimensions in the practice of sending cards in an article, "Games People Play at Christmas;"

The "con," or double-talk, begins halfway down the list, when communion is gradually replaced by courtesy, and he sends cards to people he really doesn't want to stroke (a psychological caress) but thinks he should. Pretty soon, courtesy gives way to cowardice and, farther down, to plain corruption.¹⁶

When this happens the sender has sold out to his weaknesses, usually fear, greed or lust, and hostility pervades his greetings. He may have a surge of self-criticism or even repugnance; he may express bitterness about the whole card business. Berne says that to avoid such feelings, the sender may include a few people he is sorry for and thus saves himself by feeling compassionate. With game players the Christmas card list follows the sequence: communion, courtesy, cowardice, corruption and compassion.

We have seen that the emergence of social control and manipulation of others for satisfaction of one's own aims is developed during the anal stage. The "games" discussed by Berne fit well under the category of

¹⁵George Buday, The History of The Christmas Card (London: Spring Books, 1964), p. 87.

¹⁶Eric Berne, "Games People Play at Christmas," McCall's, XCIII:15 (December 1966), 82.

"manipulation." The games people play at Christmas are many and varied. As it takes at least two to play a game, Berne calls the player who makes the first move "White" and the respondent "Black." The receiver of Christmas cards (Black) may respond with gladness, or "Who's he?" or "Some nerve!"--straight responses. But the game is on when Black says, "Don't think that I care how many cards I get. Just because I got only forty-three so far, it doesn't bother me at all. I hang them up only because they're so pretty." Berne's interpretation is that some people cannot accept love (oral problems) and have to settle for signs of it instead. But no matter how many Christmas cards they get, they will not be happy, because they are more interested in the cards than in the people who sent them. "Where cards are a promise of people, they represent life. Where they are an end in themselves, they represent mere numbers, cardboard strokes that pass in the night with no past and no future, a brief moment on the way to death."¹⁷

It is obvious that gifts can be used manipulatively as, for example, in the use of Santa Claus. Parties can be "games" for to be invited to a party is not only a "big stroke" in itself, but offers an opportunity to collect innumerable strokes in a short period of time. Berne titles some of the games of Christmas: Gee, You're Wonderful; Kick

¹⁷Ibid., p. 83.

Me; Look How Hard I've Tried; They Let Me Down; and Uproar; all being White's games. Black can enjoy himself with Ain't It Awful; Buzz Off; It's the Society We Live In; Me, Too; They're Always Out To Get You; or Try and Collect. He may play a good game of Kick Me or Uproar, too. "For people who are determined (or pre-determined) to be upset at Christmas, any of these will serve the purpose."¹⁸ Berne also discusses Church games (smugness disguised as piety); Mom games (Harried, I Told You So, I'm Only Trying to Help, See How Hard I'm Trying, etc.); Daddy games (The Damn Thing Is A Nuisance); and Children's games (Is That All?). These all are attempts to achieve some particular aim, which may be unconscious, by manipulating or controlling others through guilt, or shame, by moving them to pity, and so on. They all indicate uncertainty, unsureness, doubt, and poor self-images--all have a hostile component, and all are remnants of unsuccessful anal-crises resolution.

One other thing should be mentioned about Christmas cards and other forms of expressing "good will." One of the ego defense mechanisms is called reaction-formation. It describes the establishment of a trait or a regular pattern of behavior that is directly opposed to a strong unconscious trend. Development of aggressive behavior as a means of repressing or denying fear, or of great sympathy

¹⁸Ibid., p. 148.

as a means of repressing sadistic impulses, are examples. Such a manner of handling forbidden impulses is well illustrated in the common phrase, "killing with kindness." Sentimentality sometimes serves such a purpose of covering yet at once indicating (and being an expression of) repressed hostility.

The practice of sending Christmas cards developed upon the earlier custom of expressing loving sentiments with Valentines Day cards, and much of the sentiments and sentimentality of valentines were inherited by Christmas cards.¹⁹ Hostility is a frequent dimension of experience at Christmas time, and one of the ways in which it can be handled--that is, avoided and repressed--is in the forced "good will" and sweet sentimentality of some Christmas cards.

The importance of Will (and anal-dynamics) was brought to the author's attention in a counseling hour shortly after the Christmas holiday. A woman began counseling in the April preceding Christmas, having had two previous periods of counseling some years before, each lasting only five or six sessions. She returned to counseling expecting it too to be for a few sessions. Her fears of dependency were immediately apparent: the idea of becoming dependent upon a therapist produced a lot of resistance and ambivalence,

¹⁹Buday, op. cit., p. 52.

and her behavior in family life, social contacts, and counseling was controlling and manipulative. She continued weekly sessions, however, far beyond the expected five or six times, suffering depression, anger, threatening to quit, and in various ways attacking and inviting her counselor to reject her. Over this period of time she became more sure of herself and less anxious about immediate resolution of problems. She noticed that she had become more patient with her children and more tolerant of conflicts. Her husband entered counseling during this period and this gave her some reassurance that he did, after all, care about her and their marriage. In general, over this period of nine months her trust and faith grew and she became more hopeful. She reported that she had a good Christmas, and it was not until she took down the Christmas tree that she became sad and cried. In her counselor's mind the association was made to the symbolism of the passing of light, and he suspected that her sadness had something to do with fear of death. He said nothing but listened to her own associations. To her the taking down of the tree meant "the passing of time" and made her think about the fact that her children were growing up and she was feeling "less pressure of motherhood." Her association to "the passing of time" was not death, as suspected, but "decline." In the few sessions preceding the present one, as well as during this hour, she spoke of the fact that she had survived childhood and adulthood by sheer

"will." (Her mother had left her and a sister with their father when she was ten years old, and she was subsequently sent to live with an aunt.) Because of earlier experiences she was reluctant to trust or depend upon anyone else: not surprisingly, she therefore married a very passive, dependent man. To her, "decline" meant the decline in her abilities to function competently and with a sense of purpose; that her "will" to accomplish something would be frustrated by declining ability.

This account is obviously sketchy but it provides enough information to make some interpretations and to indicate the transition from one developmental stage to another, the dynamics of which were intensified by Christmas. During the nine months of her therapy her trust was verified in the relationship with her counselor, who did not react with hostility to her attacks, and who did not reject her even when she invited it. In this experience her sense of basic trust gained strength, her faith in herself and those around her increased, and hope became more real. Illustrative of this is the fact that she wrote and had published a magazine article, something she had wanted to do for years, but was afraid to attempt. Anal dynamics are involved in this, too, for she began to feel good about what she produced; her feelings about herself and her body became more positive and she began to dress with more taste, and had her hair fixed more regularly. Her "surviving on will" over the years was

more characteristic of what Erikson calls pseudo-autonomy than it was a genuine autonomy--for her doubt and shame were excessive, as was her dependency which was skillfully disguised.

Because her trust was more secure her growing autonomy was also more genuine. She was not sad about her children's growing up and the point of her feeling "less pressure of her motherhood" was that she was more free to carry on her own affairs--more independent and autonomous. It is suspected that under her conscious thoughts about "decline" there is unconscious fear about death. But her associations to "decline" describe exactly the virtues of the next two developmental stages, the virtue of purpose emerging in the phallic stage, and the virtue of competence emerging in the latency period. In reviewing her therapy and relating her recent Christmas experience this woman described and evidenced the dimensions and dynamics of the first four developmental stages with unmistakable clarity.

It may be pointed out here that the dynamics and crises of all the developmental stages are implicit dimensions of the Christmas celebration. Predominance of factors characteristic of one developmental phase does not mean there is an exclusion of the dynamics of the other stages. It is also true that a particular behavior may express the dynamics of more than one developmental stage. The giving of gifts at Christmas, for example, mentioned in this

chapter with regard to anality, was primarily discussed in the section on the birth of siblings and will be discussed again in the next chapter. Thus sibling rivalry, orality, e.g., receiving, and anality are all possible dimensions of this one behavior.

The particular anal qualities, however, discussed in regard to Christmas include basic feelings of goodness and badness, obsessive-compulsive behavior, doubt and shame, self-restraint or lack of it, manipulation and control. It was pointed out that the good will of the holiday, especially in sentimentality, may be a reaction-formation against hostility rooted in anal as well as other stage dynamics. The intention of such analysis is not to provide the reader with a vocabulary and knowledge with which he can label the Christmas behavior and mood of persons--which in itself may be anal-sadistic--but to point out that the dynamics of hate as well as love which pervade much of this behavior and mood, are rooted deep within the psyche and may indicate lack of integration and resolution.

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CHAPTER IV

THE INSTITUTION OF PURPOSE

The developing child often finds himself in situations in which he does not quite know what he wants and why, which makes his willfulness rather desperate at times. There is, then, the need and subsequent development of the rudiments of purpose in the third psychosexual-psychosocial stage, the Phallic-Oedipal phase.

This third stage is referred to as the phallic stage because of the organization of libidinal impulses in the genitalia. Beginning in the third or fourth year of life, the combination of this libidinal organization and the object relationships results in what is called the Oedipal complex, which simply means that the object love for the boy is his mother, for the girl her father. A complex of feelings and thoughts develop: love and sexual desire toward the parent of the opposite sex; love and rivalry toward the parent of the same sex; hostility, fear of punishment, and guilt. If the fear and guilt of the oedipal complex are excessive the child may become inhibited and excessively repressed, controlled by an unreasonable and irrational super-ego. To the degree that this happens the child's ego suffers, his initiative becomes restrained by guilt and fear, and he establishes only a faltering sense of purpose.

The growing child experiences, re-experiences, and

works through these complex feelings and thoughts to a large degree in his play. Taking initiative and being able to play, free of inhibiting guilt, are important dimensions of the young child's life and of the celebration of Christmas.

Purpose, which emerges in the interplay of psychosocial and psychosexual dynamics of this third developmental stage, is discussed further in the first section of this chapter. The second section presents the fundamentals of the psychodynamics, and then in section three some of the behaviors and moods of Christmas are discussed in terms of these psychosocial and psychosexual feelings and attitudes.

I. PURPOSE: AN INDISPENSABLE VIRTUE

The third vital virtue that develops in infantile man's prolonged immaturity is purpose. He must develop in "mere" fantasy and play the rudiments of purpose, "a temporal perspective giving direction and focus to concerted striving,"¹ that his willfulness not be chaotic. Play is to the child what thinking, planning, and blueprinting are to the adult, a trial universe in which conditions are simplified and methods are exploratory. In his play the child's past failures can be thought through and expectations can be tested. The rules of play cannot be altogether imposed by the will of adults: toys and playmates are the child's

¹Erik Erikson, Insight and Responsibility (New York: Norton, 1964), p. 120.

equals.² In the toy world, the child "plays out" the past, often in disguised form, and he begins to master the future by anticipating it in countless variations of repetitive themes. In his sphere of make-believe he takes the various role-images of his elders, and thus can find out how it feels to become like some of them. Play provides for the evolutionary necessity of binding together an inner and an outer world, a remembered past and an anticipated future, before the child can learn to master the tools used in co-operation, the roles composing the community, and the purposes pursued in a given vocation, profession, and/or technology.

Childhood play thus supplies an intermediate reality in which purposefulness can disengage itself from fixations on the past. Erikson comments that "it seems significant that play is more intense when the period of infantile sexuality comes to an end and when that greatest human barrier, the universal 'incest-taboo', is met."³ Sexual drive and purposeful energy must at this development point begin to be diverted from the very parental persons who first awakened the child's tenderness, sensuality, and amorphous

²Anna Freud, "Certain Types and Stages of Social Maladjustments," in Kurt Eissler (ed.), Searchlights on Delinquency (New York: International Universities Press, 1949), p. 194. ". . . it is normal and inevitable that he should misunderstand and distort what he perceives of the external world. The child passes through stages when he identifies elements of the external world with his own person or body."

³Erikson, op. cit., p. 121.

sexual fantasies: it is diverted toward a future which at first is fantastic but gradually is of more and more realizable goals.

The play of young animals is predicated upon parental protection from hunger and from danger. In man it is, furthermore, dependent on protection from unmanageable conflict. The play age relies on the existence of the family in one of its exemplary forms. The family, especially the parents, must gradually delineate where play ends and purpose begins, where fantasy is no longer permissible and to-be-learned reality all-demanding: only thus can conscience be integrated. The mainstream of psychoanalytic theory ascribes the development of the super-ego (conscience and ego-ideal) to this critical developmental period (see p. 173).

It is not always understood that one of the main rationales for marital and familial loyalty is the imperative need for inner unity in the child's conscience at the very time when he can and must envisage goals beyond the family. For the voices and images of those adults who are now internalized as an inner voice must not contradict each other too flagrantly.⁴

These images and voices contribute to the child's most intense conscience development. Threats, punishments, and warnings all have in common the designation of certain acts (and by implication, thoughts) as having a social and, indeed, eternal reality which can never be undone, and therefore add to the possibility of developing a severe,

⁴Ibid.

tyrannical conscience. "Conscience accepts such irreversibility as internal and private, and it is all the more important that it incorporate the ethical example of a family purposefully united in familial and economic pursuits."⁵ A sense of inner (and outer) unity then gives the child the inner freedom to move on into whatever school setting his culture has ready for him.

Purposefulness is now ready to gradually attach itself to a sense of reality which is defined by what can be attained and by what can be shared in words. Thus, conscience, the consistent inner voice which delineates permissible action and thought, finds a powerful ally in the structure of language which verifies a shared actuality.⁶

Accordingly, Erikson formulates a definition of purpose.

Purpose, then, is the courage to envisage and pursue valued goals uninhibited by the defeat of infantile fantasies, by guilt and by the foiling fear of punishment.⁷

⁵Ibid., p. 122.

⁶Cf. Lili Peller, "Comments on Libidinal Organizations and Child Development," Journal of American Psychoanalytic Association, XIII:4 (1965), 732-747: According to psychoanalytic view, mental functions of considerable complexity and precision can be carried out by the young child, prior to the acquisition of symbolic language. But the fact that they are being carried out cannot become part of his consciousness. Only after they are linked with word presentations can mental acts as such, as well as complex relations, become perceivable.

⁷Erikson, op. cit., p. 122.

Purpose invests ideals of action and is derived from the example of the basic family. "It is the strength of aim-direction fed by fantasy yet not fantastic, limited by guilt but not inhibited, morally restrained yet ethically active."⁸ One is reminded of a definition of a poet: a man with his head in the clouds and his feet on the ground.

Even as man began as a playing child, however, there is forever a residue of play-acting and role-playing even in what he considers his highest purposes. As an adult man sees these enacted in the tableaux of his past history, he projects them on a larger and more perfect future stage, and he dramatizes them in the ceremonial present with uniformed players in ritual arrangements. Although Erikson makes no mention of it at this point, there seems to be obvious reference to religion. Play-acting, role-playing, and the dramatization with uniformed players in ritual arrangements is relevant both to the church and Christmas.

II. THE PSYCHODYNAMICS OF THE PHALLIC STAGE

Purpose emerges in the playing child in the context of active curiosity, fantasies, guilt, and fear of punishment. These point to the psychodynamics of the phallic stage. Beginning about the third or fourth year of life the genitals take a leading place in libidinal organization

⁸Ibid.

and the interest in them and in genital masturbation attains a dominant significance. As an organ of erogenous sensitivity the genitals are highly effective from birth on: genital masturbation can be observed in infants.⁹ Sexual excitement, however, becomes more and more concentrated in the genitals and eventually discharged the genital way.

The infantile genital organization has common trends and differences as compared with adult sexuality. The similarities concern the genital concentration of sexual impulses and the object relations, the point which marks this stage as one of extreme importance and intense conflict. The trends of genital organization and object-choice culminate in the phenomenon which, following Freud, is called the Oedipus complex. The Oedipus complex is considered, with justice, as the corner-stone of psychoanalytical theory, and upon it is concentrated much of the weight of opposition to psychoanalysis. In consequence people are apt to forget the important fact, as Alice Balint points out, that the Oedipus complex is neither a dogma nor a theory to explain certain facts, but the description and synthesis of generally observable and established facts.¹⁰ To express it bluntly, at this early age the object of love

⁹Otto Fenichel, The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis (New York: Norton, 1945), p. 74. See also, Alice Balint, The Early Years of Life (New York: Basic Books, 1954), p. 33.

¹⁰Balint, Ibid., p. 35.

for the little boy is his mother, and for the little girl, her father. Observation of children reveals sexual interest and play at this age, including acts of intercourse.

Erikson says that such open and playful acts probably help to ease a development that is potentially dangerous: namely, the exclusive direction of early sexual impulses toward the parents, especially where there is a complete taboo on the communication of such desire. The child's increased locomotor mastery and his pride of being big now and almost as good as Father and Mother receives its severest setback in the clear fact that in the genital sphere one is vastly inferior; and furthermore that not even in the distant future is one ever going to be the father in sexual relationship to the mother or the mother in sexual relationship to the father.

Psychoanalysis verifies in daily work the simple conclusion that boys attach their first genital affection to the maternal adults who have otherwise given comfort to their bodies, and that they develop their first sexual rivalry against the person who are the genital owners of those maternal persons. Similar wishes develop in little girls toward their fathers. To conclude however, as is often done, that if the little boy had the power of a man, he would rape his mother and murder his father is meaningless. For, as Erikson points out, if he had such power he would not be a child and would not need to stay with his

parents--in which case he might simply prefer other sex objects. As it is, however, infantile genitality attaches itself to the protectors and ideals of childhood and suffers intense complications therefrom. The story of this love marks for all an important period in life; all have repressed memories of it. It is a story of hopeless love, for the lovers here usually are much worse off than are grown-ups in similar cases. They may be compared to people who have the misfortune to fall in love with the husband, or wife, of their best friend. For, indeed, a child is bound by love and tenderness to its rival as well. The child feels alternating love and hate for the same person (its rival). As time goes on, however, these two feelings under the influence of education become incompatible. Then begins the psychical struggle which usually results in the repression of the one or other of them, usually the feelings of hate and hostility; this involves the repression at the same time of all the wishes connected with the feeling of rivalry which has caused the hate.

It is widely confirmed that to children of this age, adult sex acts seem to be dangerous acts of mutual aggression; they regard it as a fight. This notion does not exclude their recognition of the sexual nature of the act. The child seems to interpret the sex acts of his elders as intrusive on the part of the male and incorporative in a spidery way on the part of the female. This is especially

true where darkness surrounds adult sex life, where sounds accompanying it are interpreted as expressions of pain, where menstrual blood is observed surreptitiously, and where a not infrequent hostile aftermath is perceived in the insufficiently satisfied parents. Children can experience for themselves, too, in connection with their games with each other, that fighting can induce sensual excitement.

The intrusive mode dominating much of the behavior of this stage characterizes a variety of configurationally "similar" activities and fantasies. These include the intrusion into other bodies by physical attack; the intrusion into other people's ears and minds by aggressive talking; the intrusion into space by vigorous locomotion; the intrusion into the unknown by consuming curiosity.

Erikson writes that the genital stage adds to the inventory of basic social modalities in both sexes that of "making" in the sense of "being on the make." The word suggests head-on attack, enjoyment of competition, insistence on goal, pleasure of conquest. The child thus develops the prerequisites for initiative, for the selection of goals and perseverance in approaching them.

At once, however, this general readiness for initiative meets its arch-enemy in the necessity of delaying and displacing its sexual core: for this sexual core is both biologically incomplete and culturally opposed by incest taboos. The 'oedipus' wishes . . . lead to secret fantasies of vague murder and rape. The consequence is a deep sense of guilt--a strange sense, for it forever seems to imply that the individual has committed a crime which, after all, was not only not

committed, but would have been biologically quite impossible.¹¹

This secret guilt, however, helps to drive the whole weight of initiative toward desirable ideals and immediately practical goals, and at no time is the individual more ready to learn quickly and avidly. To profit fully by the association with teachers presupposes, however, that a lasting solution is being found for this third nuclear conflict; the conflict between initiative and guilt.

Parents often augment this sense of guilt over the hostile feelings towards the rival in that, they themselves evoke voluptuous feelings in their children in play, affection, and caresses, yet call those very sensations wrong. The children, therefore, never quite know whether the grown-ups feel the same pleasure as they do, or whether this is merely a sign of their own wickedness. Adults' lack of honesty in relation to their own pleasurable sensations is one of the greatest obstacles to a true friendship between children and their parents. Often sexuality and respectability remain incompatible, and difficulties in loving continue throughout life.

Girls have a difficult time during this developmental stage because they must learn that although their locomotor, mental, and social intrusiveness is equally increased and

¹¹Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society (New York: Norton, 1950), p. 86.

as adequate as that of the boys, they lack one item: the penis. While the boy has this visible, erectable and comprehensible organ to attach dreams of adult bigness to, the girl's clitoris cannot sustain dreams of sexual equality. She does not even have breasts as analogously tangible tokens of her future; her maternal instincts are relegated to play, fantasy or baby tending. If the female role and its specific powers and rewards are not made comprehensible and integrated by the young girl, she is apt to develop, together with the basic modes of feminine inception and maternal inclusion, either a teasing, demanding, grasping, attitude which at its height is called "bitchiness", or a clinging and overly-dependent childishness. Girls are often angry that they do not have a penis, and envious because boys do. They sometimes feel unalterably inferior because they lack this organ of esteem; and confused, wondering if they once had a penis which was taken from them as a form of punishment. Psychoanalysis has revealed that part of the girl's fantasied desire for her father is because then she can have a penis. She may feel hostile toward her mother, thinking that it is the mother who has deprived her of a penis. She transfers her love from mother to father partly because he has the valued organ which she aspires to share with him. This love, however, is mixed with envy: penis envy is the counterpart of castration anxiety in the boy. She imagines she lost something valuable; he is

afraid he may lose it. "To some extent, the lack of a penis is compensated for when a woman has a baby, especially if the baby is a boy."¹²

The girl is ambivalent in her feelings toward her mother, she both loves and hates her. If she feels (or is) rejected by her mother during, and because of, oedipal dynamics she may desire unconsciously, and in fantasy, the acquisition of a penis that she may reestablish a loving relationship with her mother, such as father and brother have.

Thus, in their ambivalence toward the parent of the same sex, and their love for the parent of the opposite sex, both boys and girls fear punishment. The boy's fears center on the organ associated with his loving feelings, the penis, with the fear that it will be taken from him as punishment.

This is the stage of fear for life and limbs, including the fear of losing (or on the part of the girl the conviction that she may have lost) the male genital as punishment for the fantasies attached to infantile genital excitement.¹³

Both castration-anxiety and penis-envy tend to make loving more difficult for the child (and adult), indeed perhaps even to make it turn from love altogether. For love

¹²C. Hall and G. Lindsay, Theories of Personality (New York: Wiley and Sons, 1957), p. 54.

¹³Erik Erikson, "Identity and the Life Cycle," Psychological Issues, I:1 (1959), 79.

can come to signify the abandonment of the belief in one's own completeness, adequacy, integrity. The boy, not overwhelmed by fear and guilt, aided by the sublimation of the instinctual aims and the repression of oedipal wishes, begins the process of identifying with his father; the girl with her mother. If overwhelmed, however, self-esteem may be preserved at the expense of love. One of mankind's most difficult tasks is to recover, after this major retreat into narcissism which may end the Oedipus-love, the courage and ability to love again.¹⁴

The Phallic stage is, thus, a time of tremendous stirrings of the sexual and aggressive impulses, producing feelings of love, hate, envy, and fear. Erikson points out that this stage is the cornerstone of morality in the individual sense, but warns that if this achievement is overburdened by all-too-eager adults, the child may develop a primitive, cruel, and uncompromising conscience. Conscience is one element of the super-ego which is viewed by the mainstream of psychoanalytic thought as originating in this stage (Melanie Klein and her associates believe that the super-ego originates during the second oral stage). The super-ego is a system within the total psyche developed by incorporating the parental standards as perceived by the

¹⁴The church can aid recovery from such narcissism in, for example, its services of worship, by offering man God's love and grace. (See ahead, Part III.)

ego of the young child. More broadly it includes incorporating the moral standards of society represented by the family. There are two parts to the super-ego, the ego ideal and conscience. Hopefully, the child's guilt and fear will not be exploited by his parents, his ego ideal will not be one of impossible perfection and his conscience an intolerant and unaccepting internal judge. The development of a severe and intolerant super-ego inhibits further growth, for rather than the ego's growing in strength and control the super-ego functions as the source of conscious and unconscious motivation operating through guilt, shame, injunction and threat. Intrapsychically, when the id impulses are met by the super-ego restrictions and prohibitions, conflict results. Resolution is accomplished by a strong and functioning ego.

The attitudes of initiative and guilt, the conscience and ego ideal, basic feelings about one's sexual impulses, his sense of purpose, and the nature and quality of his loving are all critical dimensions and consequences of the crises of the third stage of development. Just as specific factors of the preceding stages are formative of and inherent qualities in the celebration of Christmas, so too are phallic-oedipal dynamics implicit in much Christmas behavior and mood. In the next section these factors are discussed with specific regard to the holiday.

III. THE BEHAVIOR AND MOODS OF CHRISTMAS:

THE PHALLIC PSYCHODYNAMICS

The father of two young children, a six year old girl and a four year old boy, gave his son (whose own oedipal feelings were coming to the front) a model road-racing set for Christmas. It is one which requires skill to operate, for the persons actually control the speed of the cars which are subject to the laws of gravity and centrifugal force just as are real cars. This same man received, from his wife, a new rain hat. The father is a quiet accountant who seldom stands out and rarely displays what Erikson calls intrusiveness (aggressiveness). His wife reported that "something got into him" this Christmas. One evening he sat up with his wife and shared with her innumerable fantasies about what he would like to be--successful, aggressive, wealthy, a man among men, and imagined that the people at work would wonder, "What happened to _____?" if he became as outgoing as he fantasied. Such conversation is not characteristic of him, and his wife was quite "taken" by this side of her man. It should be mentioned that this flight into fantasy was accomplished by the drinking of bourbon. The day after Christmas the wife was awakened by the sounds of the model cars zooming around their course. She went into the living room, and there sat her husband, hat on head, "driving" for all he was worth.

This delightful account of a man's enjoyment of

Christmas has many associations with the dynamics of the phallic developmental stage. Being an accountant in and of itself suggests the orderliness and compulsive concern for details characteristic of the anal-stage dynamics, and leads one to suspect fixation at this point. However, his fantasies all represent phallic dynamics, as does his play. Hats are often unconscious phallic symbols.¹⁵ And driving a race car is certainly representative of the intrusive, aggressive, and vigorous locomotion characteristic of this developmental stage. Actually his fantasies interpret his play: he was involved in the sphere of make-believe wherein he assumed a role-image of the kind of person he would like to be. His ability to play in this way may have something to do with the fact that his son is in the phallic stage at present, a fact which enables him (via identification) to relive his own phallic childhood.

One wonders why he has not in reality become the person he fantasies being, but such speculation is beyond the scope of this inquiry. There may be, however, specific association to the function of the super-ego. Recall that he fantasied while drinking: it has been pointed out that the part of the psyche most readily soluble in alcohol is

¹⁵Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams (New York: Carlton House, 1931), p. 247; and J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962), p. 134

the conscience.¹⁶ Perhaps it was through the temporary relaxation of a punitive super-ego that this father was able to play and for a while to be what he would like to be.

In his article, "Negative Reactions to Christmas," Jule Eisenbud points out that "of all the festivals, that marking the Christmas and New Year season is characterized by the greatest relaxation on the part of the super-ego of society, so to speak."¹⁷ He comments that the observance of secular and religious festivals is in general marked by the individual's gratification of infantile wishes which are normally held in check by feelings of guilt. A festival, according to Eisenbud, is a social sanction to forms of enjoyment which at other times must be held to a judicious minimum.

Some merely indulge in immoderate eating and drinking; others look forward to unbridling their ordinarily monotonous sexual lives; exhibitionistic persons use a holiday as a pretext for jumping onto the stage; still others, according to their lights.¹⁸

Thus, Eisenbud explains the behavior and mood of Christmas in terms of the temporary relaxation of the individual's (and society's) super-ego. This is the season when governments grant amnesties and penal institutions distribute

¹⁶H. B. and Ava English, A Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychological and Psychoanalytic Terms (New York: Longmans, Green, 1958), p. 535.

¹⁷Jule Eisenbud, "Negative Reactions to Christmas," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, X:4 (1941), 639.

¹⁸Ibid.

pardons, and warring nations call a temporary truce. It is the season when solid citizens become liquid and "the devil is raised." "When it is all over, repression (of unconscious, instinctual, impulses) resumes and the air is disinfected with good resolutions."¹⁹ The converse of this type of reaction is seen in those persons who are unable "to make the most of a celebration, must always suffer, must never for any reason discard their sackcloth."²⁰

Eisenbud believes that just the idea of having enjoyment invites the negative reactions. A person so controlled by the super-ego would be afraid to be freed from its bondage, for he has no assurance that he (his ego) is strong enough to resist the temptations the unconscious (id) impulses would seek. Such a person has, probably, never achieved a successful resolution of the phallic-oedipal conflict; his guilt weighs heavily, interferes with and inhibits his play (as was perhaps the case in childhood).

In contrast to Eisenbud, Sterba believes that the emotional experiences at Christmas are more determined by the religious and archaic content of the festival, seeing the celebration of the birth of the Christ child as having implicit associations with the behavior at Christmas. His interpretation is that Christmas is also an acting out of childbirth in the family including the associated sexual

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

activities implicit in birth (see discussion under Birth, Chapter I).

One of the things Sterba mentions is that gifts symbolically represent babies. During the discussion of the anal-stage dynamics it was mentioned that a person's first experience of giving is that of the "giving" of the feces, and that feelings about giving have roots in this experience. Psychoanalysis has also discovered that often there are associations between feces and child. Children are told that a baby is in the mother's stomach, and they know that things get into the stomach through the mouth (oral conception), and that what was in the stomach comes out the anus. Many children believe that babies are thus born through the rectum: a woman reported to the author that it was not until after the birth of her first child that she knew otherwise (probably the defense of denial was involved in this misunderstanding). Fenichel writes that "the conception of 'child' (gift) forms a bridge between the conception of feces and genital ideas."²¹

It is also known that the little girl suffering from penis envy may, in fantasy, replace her desire for a penis with the idea of "child."²² Thus there is a symbolic association: penis-feces-child. The relevance to the present discussion is that the giving of gifts may allow for

²¹Fenichel, op. cit., p. 350. ²²Ibid., p. 90.

gratification of unconscious oedipal wishes by abolishing the fear and guilt through the super-ego's reinforcement of gift-giving.

Super-ego dynamics are also relevant to Christmas in terms of the ego-ideal. Jacob Arlow points out that identification with heroes or heroines of the classic myths point the way to the establishment of ego ideals and super-ego structures in consonance with the moral traditions of the society.

The central myth of a religion serves to bind the adherents to the faith by virtue of the instinctual gratification which is vicariously afforded by way of identification with the central figure of the myth. (This) instinctual gratification is connected with an id impulse, with an instinctual wish of childhood, which is unconscious, which is defensively distorted by the ego, and which is integrated into the final structure of the myth in a manner which honors the super-ego demands.²³

Arlow sees in the image of the Madonna such instinctual gratification, via identification. He believes the Madonna theme is connected with the fulfillment of unconscious incestuous wishes of the oedipal stage. By identifying with the Madonna, little girls achieve in fantasy the fulfillment of the incestuous wish while, at the same time, they are directed by this identification to the imitation of those ideal qualities of purity, virtue, and unselfish love

²³Jacob Arlow, "The Madonna's Conception Through the Eyes," in The Psychoanalytic Study of Society (New York: International Universities Press, 1964), III, 13.

which are represented by the image of the Madonna. In other words, via such identification, unconscious incestuous wishes are gratified in fantasy while at the same time the super-ego demands are honored.

A speculation concomitant with the interpretations based upon Arlow's research is that boys (men), too, may gratify unconscious oedipal wishes by identifying not with the Madonna, but with her son. Identification with the son of a virgin would gratify the wishes to be the sole love object of the oedipal mother, and at the same time avoid the fear and guilt with regard to the child's rival, the oedipal father.

In the earlier discussion on Birth and Siblings it was pointed out that one of the sources of depression at Christmas is unresolved sibling rivalry, an implicit dimension of which is penis-envy and castration-anxiety. Boyer reports the case of a man who, like many of the women patients, envied possession of a penis. This man's mother wanted a girl; he was clad in dresses and wore curls until he was four or five, and any aggressive behavior on his part was punished by his mother's withdrawal. Many of the patients believed that possession of a penis was the answer to their problems. Although this belief (wish) was unconscious, especially in the women, their life-styles were in accord with their wish. The relevance of such wishes to Christmas can be illustrated by including verbatim Boyer's

comments upon one of the cases he presents.

Her overwhelming wish was to be an infant without responsibility or competition. Her childhood sibling rivalry was unrealistic, but intense. In her analysis, it became clear that her fantasied solution to her dilemma (the inability to obtain omnipotent infancy) was to fight physically or professionally with men with the aim of acquiring a penis. With her penis she could have sexual relations with her mother. The expected reward for gratifying her mother sexually was permanently available and full breasts. To get father's penis, first she must give him her son.

During childhood Yuletides, she imagined God or Santa Claus would bring her the necessary penis. As was revealed through her analysis, her prepubertal unconscious evaluation of her obesity was that she was pregnant. The onset of her menstruation and her adolescent slimming were doubly traumatic.

In adulthood she had been depressed and anxious regularly during the Christmas season. The return of repressed wishes and the anticipation of renewed frustration caused her to act out childhood fantasies in her attempt to rectify the childhood traumata. During one Christmas depression, she consciously considered Christ to be her rival.²⁴

Such thoughts and wishes are not usually considered nor observed at Christmas because they are deeply repressed and unconscious, and even the person so thinking is not aware of them. But they may be there as the cause of Christmas depression, guilt, and hostility.

At a party two nights before Christmas a woman (the mother of four children) was discussing the fact that every Christmas she has the desire to have a baby. She thought this interesting, but had no idea why it happened. She is a very aggressive, hostile woman, whose constant talking is

²⁴Bryce Boyer, "Christmas 'Neurosis'," Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, III (1955), 471.

quite intrusive. We can speculate: she may want to have a baby to satisfy her wish to have a penis, to gratify oedipal wishes, to complete the fantasied acting-out of childbirth by the family; perhaps to "win" in an unresolved sibling rivalry. Another young woman, in counseling with the author, reported both dreams and fantasies of being pregnant during the holiday. She is not married, and her fantasies did not include being married or even having sexual intercourse. She just wanted to be pregnant and have a baby. It reminds one of identification with the virgin Madonna.

One other example of phallic-stage dynamics which may be evident at Christmas is the quality of initiative. It is obvious that many take a lot of initiative during the holidays; it is equally obvious that many lack initiative and procrastinate. While procrastination may have anal-stage roots (withholding), the lack of initiative and passive waiting and wanting suggest lack of resolution of the phallic-stage conflict and regression to oral dynamics.

PART III

THE CHURCH AND THE ANNUAL CRISIS OF LOVE

In an insightful article on Christmas, Loudon Wainwright made the comment that Christmas is not so much a holiday as it is an "annual crisis of love," for it forces people to expose themselves and their feelings to those who are the very closest.¹ This kind of exposure leaves a person vulnerable, both to the judgments of his own super-ego, and to the responses of his loved ones. Christmas is a time when such exposure is invited, threatened, and rejected. Where love prevails, understanding, care and acceptance provide for integration and assist growth (Life); where fear (and hate) reigns, judgment and rejection produce separation and isolation (Death).

CHAPTER I

RELIGION AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

Love and hate, integration and separation, are the concerns of both religion and psychiatry, and as Karl Menninger has pointed out, "religion has been the world's psychiatrist throughout the centuries."² A study such as

¹Loudon Wainwright, "The Annual Crisis of Love," Life (December 15, 1965), 18.

²Karl Menninger, Man Against Himself (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1938), p. 449.

Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective³ gives convincing evidence that the church at its best has always had a vital interest in what we now call mental health, and the four pastoral functions of healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciliation are also appropriate descriptions of the psychiatric endeavors. Religion can be a constructive, healing and life-affirming force, or a dark, repressive, life-crippling force, depending upon the way it is understood and on the way it is used. Religion utilized to excuse selfishness or cruelty, or to rationalize delusions and hallucinations, or to clothe oneself in a comforting illusion of omnipotence is not healthy. Religion utilized to instill fear and guilt, to judge and condemn, to segregate and deny is not wholesome (holy) and creative, but destructive like the work of the Devil. A group of clinically-trained chaplains summarized the insights derived from their work in mental hospitals and prisons by making the critical comment:

Churches have had too little concern for understanding why people behave as they do and have been most relentless in their condemnation of acts contrary to social standards with the result that many have responded with intense guilt feelings The guilty feel a sense of fear, loneliness, and rejection and the result is various degrees of emotional disturbance.⁴

Lack of concern for the "reasons why" is a form of rejection

³William A. Clebsch and C. J. Jaekle, Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964).

⁴"American Protestantism and Mental Health," Journal of Clinical Pastoral Work, I:4 (Winter 1948), 1.

and is in direct opposition to the consistent emphasis in Jesus' teaching on the roots or underlying causes of behavior in the "heart" of man. His concern was for the underlying wholeness of personality.⁵

Psychoanalysis and depth psychology has confirmed the wisdom of Jesus' focus by discovering many of the hidden (unconscious) causes of behavior. The trauma of birth and the complexities and conflicts of nursing, toilet training, and loving leave their mark upon the personality of the growing child and remain (unconsciously) in the adult as real, impelling, and motivating forces. Because the unconscious contains the "reasons" behind so much of what man does, he lives for the most part, unaware of the "whys" and "meanings" of his behavior. It is not, necessarily, the place of the church nor religion to tell him "why," but to understand that much of what he does is his peculiar way of attempting to resolve the inner conflicts and maintain his self-esteem, even though the attempts are often futile and make things worse.⁶ It is extremely important for the church to realize this (as Jesus did) and minister accordingly, not only at Christmas, but year around.

⁵See William G. Cole, Sex in Christianity and Psychoanalysis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), Chapter I.

⁶"What to the observer looks like an especially powerful manifestation of naked instinct is often only a desperate plea for the permission to synthesize and sublimate in the only way possible." Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society (New York: Norton, 1950), p. 213.

"Mature religion is well integrated with scientific truth,"⁷ and it is only mature religion which can aid in the maturation of man. Anything less leaves religion subject to the criticism that it exploits, for the sake of its own political establishment, the most infantile striving in man. Such maturity is like unto Erikson's understanding of the virtue Wisdom.⁸ It is the essence of accumulated knowledge and judgment which maintains and conveys the integrity of experience. It sustains an integrated heritage yet remains aware of the relativity of all knowledge, and combines vigor of mind with the gift of responsible renunciation.

That religion has not acknowledged the facts of reality and has defended itself against reality-testing through sanctity, rigidity, intolerance, and prohibition of thought has been discussed and documented.⁹ The cult of reassurance and positive thinking is a prevalent type of reality-denying religion.¹⁰ In his book, The Future of An Illusion, Freud suggests, however, that religion admits of an ideational refinement and sublimation by which it can be divested of most of its traces of primitive and infantile

⁷Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Mental Health Through Christian Community (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965), p. 43.

⁸Erik Erikson, Insight and Responsibility (New York: Norton, 1964), pp. 132ff.

⁹See Sigmund Freud, The Future of An Illusion (Garden City: Doubleday, 1957).

¹⁰Clinebell, op. cit., p. 44.

ways of thinking.¹¹ That religion is disciplining itself against such thinking and is facing reality is evident in the literature and curricula of the seminaries, and the wide-spread religious unrest of our day suggests the kind of crisis and dialogue which is intrinsic to growth and integrity.

Religion and the church are taking the truths of the sciences seriously. Psychological insight and language, for better and worse, are commonly relied upon and our appreciation and understanding of the moods of Christmas have been greatly increased by the science and art of psychoanalysis. The dialogue between theology and psychology (and psychiatry) is earnest, a remarkable and stimulating example of which is found in the letters between Freud and his good friend, the Swiss pastor, Oskar Pfister. In one of his first letters to Pfister (1909) Freud wrote:

In itself psycho-analysis is neither religious nor non-religious, but an impartial tool which both priest and layman can use in the service of the sufferer. I am very much struck by the fact that it never occurred to me how extraordinarily helpful the psycho-analytic method might be in pastoral work.¹²

John Maguire has pointed out genuine similarities between the best of Christian teaching and some ideas and aims of psychoanalysis.

¹¹Freud, op. cit., p. 94.

¹²Sigmund Freud and O. Pfister, Psychoanalysis and Faith (New York: Basic Books, 1963), p. 17.

1. Both are essentially antimoralistic, seeking the transformation of personality rather than mere suppression of symptoms.

2. Both describe . . . the distortions of human existence under pressures of anxiety and estrangement displaying a realistic pessimism.

3. Both share a measure of optimism about man's essence--the untapped reservoirs of creativity and community which flow once the dam of fearfulness has been breached.

4. Both work toward the creation of emotional sincerity and inner integrity--casting out demons of anxiety and estrangement through the power of acceptance and love.

5. Both condemn unhealthy religious faith which is masochistic and overly dependent.¹³

Appreciation and integration of scientific truths not only keeps religion realistic and relevant, but helps it keep its humility. In Totem and Taboo, Freud points out that "the scientific view of the universe no longer affords any room for human omnipotence; men have acknowledged their smallness and submitted resignedly to death and to the other necessities of nature."¹⁴ Such smallness has associations to and is repetitive of the infant's position in the world and is thus subject to the fears as well as to the faith of infantile dependence. It is through the power of acceptance and love that the fears can be overcome and faith and hope established and maintained. This is the task of both the mother and the church: such smallness, and thus the need for

¹³John David Maguire, "The Theological Uses of Psychoanalysis: Patterns, Problems, and Proposals," Religion in Life, XXVIII (Spring 1962).

¹⁴Sigmund Freud, Totem and Taboo (New York: Norton, 1952), p. 88.

love, is predominant at Christmas.

I. A FUNCTION OF MYTH AND RITE

Man's unconscious is not just a storehouse of repressed memories and primitive impulses, it is also the well-spring of creativity. Healthy religion, through its symbolic rites, myths, and beliefs, helps the individual keep in contact with his unconscious, and provides for cathartic relief of unconscious conflict. Myth and rite, by discharging repressed instinctual drives, contributes to the ego's ability to master reality and to establish its own identity.¹⁵ The religious ceremonies can contribute to wholeness by providing for expression of "socially unusable instinctual impulses" (Rank) which have been repressed. Such discharge results in a sense of renewal, for the ego is temporarily relieved of the energy-draining task of keeping such unconscious processes repressed, and can turn its attention to other tasks. Yet the wholeness is only partial and temporary, for it has been achieved by the relief of tension rather than the resolution and integration of conflicting forces creating tension. This does not invalidate, however, the social and personal function of relieving anxiety which myth and rite perform.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 71.

II. LOVE AND CREATIVITY

Erich Fromm points out that "the ability to love and create" characterizes mental health;¹⁶ the health (holiness) of the church is likewise in accord with its ability to love and be creative. Repression (rejection of any sort) restricts creativity, dis-integrates, and prevents joyful fulfillment.¹⁷ Tillich writes that "where there is joy there is fulfillment. And where there is fulfillment there is joy."¹⁸ Joy is more than pleasure; more than happiness. It is the depth of blessedness and fulfillment (wholeness). The opposite of joy is sorrow; the opposite of wholeness is separation.

Sorrow is the feeling that we are deprived of our central fulfillment, by being deprived of something that belongs to us and is necessary to our fulfillment.¹⁹

The foundation of fulfillment lies in the first and foremost necessity of man: the foundation is hope and the necessity is for love, originally for a loving mother. To be deprived of or alienated from (her) love means death, and the threat of the loss of love causes depression and fear.

¹⁶Erich Fromm, The Sane Society (New York: Rinehart, 1955), p. 69.

¹⁷See Norman Brown, Life Against Death (New York: Vintage Books, 1959), p. 108.

¹⁸Paul Tillich, "The Meaning of Joy," in his The New Being (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. 151.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 149.

The church as an organized community enables persons to derive from the collectivity and from its tradition a fund of re-assurance which nourishes hope and sustains the hope-less. Erikson points out that "adults entrusted with the maintenance of an infant's hope need some societal confirmation and restoration of hope, whether it is offered by religious ritual or inspired and informed advice, or both."²⁰ Generalized hopefulness is gradually transformed into a faith related to the predominant assumptions concerning the order of the universe, the faith of religion being that there is a loving God. Reassurance of love--as a quality of the infinite--can instill hope. The tradition and transmission of faith--the task of the church, is thus reassuring and life-affirming. The tradition of faith carried by the church (if it is faithful and trust-worthy) provides for the young and the weak (disintegrated) a world-image sustaining hope. The church thus plays an important role, especially at Christmas, in the ritual restoration of faith, for the conflicts of love and hate arising during the first months of life are intensified by the ultimate depths of the festival. The polarity (love-hate) remains life-long, and must be reconciled if Hope is to be genuine and Trust secure, the ground of fulfillment.

The moment of birth confronts man with death, a

²⁰Erikson, Insight and Responsibility, p. 153.

reality which must not be denied. The church again has the responsibility of maintaining tension (life-death) if it is to minister in truth and with redemptive relevance. The function of the ministry has been to assure and reassure the continuation of temporal life after death, but "the function of the ministry with respect to the popular belief in the immortality of the soul is to reject it and to replace it by the faith in eternal life above the temporal process."²¹ At this point relevance would mean basic and courageous criticism of ego-centered popular superstition; the light which brightens the darkness does not abolish darkness, but exists with it and therein has its meaning. "To point with inner authority to the eternal is the most relevant function men can perform today,"²² but only if the pointing is inclusive and not exclusive of reality.

"Eternity is neither timelessness nor the endlessness of time, it is the power of embracing all periods of time."²³ Tillich suggests that we think of eternity in terms of creativity, and in this way we are released from the problem of time, for "the creativity which leads into the future also transforms the past without absorbing their special

²¹Paul Tillich, "The Relevance of the Ministry in Our Time and Its Theological Foundation," in Hans Hofmann, editor, Making the Ministry Relevant (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), p. 35.

²²Ibid.

²³Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, 263.

character as modes of time."²⁴ It is not in a doctrine of a human soul but in the certainty of man's participation in eternal life--in the eternity of divine life (creative love)--in which man can face and overcome the threat of death. Death is given no power over creative love, and it is participation in such love in which life is affirmed and not made absurd by the destruction of death. Love is a quality of eternity; death is a fact of the temporal.²⁵ Participation in love, creatively, reconciles the anxieties of living and dying.

The church, as a community of love, is characterized by its good-will. The individual's training in domestic law and order is the ground which gives birth to will and the capacity for good-will. But just as he can become "compulsive," i.e., excessively controlled by and concerned with the mechanics of inner control, so can organized law become machinery using the letter to subdue the spirit which was to be safeguarded. The tradition of the church, originating the Jesus and Paul, is one of going "beyond the law." Yet legalistic attitudes remain as rigid and repressive forces within the church preventing growth and creativity. Such attitudes judge in condemnatory ways the

²⁴Ibid., I, 274.

²⁵Paul Tillich, Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 174.

material (and sensual) life, and arbitrarily discriminate between the sacred and the secular. The "Let's Keep Christ in Christmas" protest against secularization of the holiday may be more dis-integrative than holy, for such discrimination and separation breaks the "essential unity of holy and secular."²⁶ Everything secular can enter the realm of the holy, and the holy can be secularized. The fear and guilt which underlie rigidity and intolerance lead to unnatural (unrealistic) moralities, ethics, and theologies, which separate rather than integrate and create.

III. ALIENATION, RECONCILIATION, AND THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

Erikson reminds his readers of the polarity which the church must not ignore if it is to be a genuine source of light.

Here it must not be forgotten that religious world-images have at least contained some recognition (and this is more than radical rationalism could claim until the advent of psychoanalysis) of the abysmal alienations--from the self and from others--which are the human lot. For along with a fund of hope, an inescapable alienation is also bequeathed to life by the first stage, namely, a sense of threatening separation from the matrix, a possible loss of hope, and the uncertainty whether the "face darkly" will brighten again with recognition and charity.²⁷

It is too often ignored and even denied by the "Positive

²⁶Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 216.

²⁷Erikson, Insight and Responsibility, p. 153.

Thinkers" that there is this abysmal dimension in life. There must be non-judgmental recognition of alienation, separation, and isolation--seen clearly in loneliness and sorrow--before love can be redemptive, for recognition is intrinsic to acceptance and implicit in understanding. The history of Christmas shows that it was established and maintained as a festival of reassurance that light is not vanquished by abysmal darkness, but neither does it, once and for all, eliminate darkness.

The persistent need for reassurance and verification of hope, rooted in the "oral" stage crisis, is expressed formally and informally in the moods and behaviors of Christmas. But they also show clearly the negative pole of the first conflict: fear and anxiety, depression, envy and greed, basic mistrust. If the church would support individuals in the basic conflicts of life, and be a place where they can restore their sense of basic trust, their will and good-will, and their sense of purpose, it must acknowledge and live with the abysmal, the demonic, the dark urges and evil intents inherent in life. To encourage the "good" by repression or denial of the "bad" is to establish a false sense of security at the expense of reality, which in fact subjects the individual to an even greater vulnerability to that which is denied. It is this kind of splitting that characterizes the schizophrenic illnesses. The "evil" must be accepted if it is to be overcome: it must be recognized

and identified, then integrated. One never develops the strength, and the certainty of that strength, to resist and control the temptations to "evil" if they are never faced, accepted and made part of the integral whole. Even though some of the teachings of the church have tended to be disintegrative (in its more puritan forms), the myth and rite of the church has aided integration and reconciliation of the "dark side."

There can be no question but that it is organized religion which systematizes and socializes the first conflict in life, because religion makes comprehensible the vague subject matter contained in basic mistrust by giving it a metaphysical reality in the form of evil. It is religion which by the way of ritual methods offers man a periodic collective restitution of basic trust which in adults ripens to a continuation of faith and realism I know only too well that where organized religion fails there remains in human life a very basic void which is not taken care of by the mere denial of faith nor by an irrational over evaluation of substitute dogmas. He who believes that he can do without religion obligates himself to a new accounting for very basic human needs.²⁸

The church must not fail in helping people to recognize, integrate, and reconcile the abysmal dimensions and dynamics of life. Where it succeeds it strengthens the ego in its ability to cope with the vicissitudes of reality.

Mature faith, in its devotion to Truth, whatever its source, is capable of renunciation of old truths proven wrong by the veracity of reality. Just as the individual,

²⁸Erik Erikson, "On the Sense of Inner Identity," in Psychoanalytic Psychiatry and Psychology (New York: International Universities Press, 1954), I, 353.

in frantic search of his earliest hope-giving relationship, may end up lost in delusions and addictions, so too is religion, when it loses its bond with living realities, apt to regress to the fostering of illusory and addictive promises or empty fantasy.²⁹ Man is aware of his finitude, his guilt, and his estrangement from his true being. Many are tortured by an uneasiness about life, feeling far-removed from fulfilled humanness. How is it possible to conquer the inner conflict between the good that one wills and the bad that one does? The church cannot even attempt to answer this question if it removes its seriousness. Moralistic preaching does not aid people in the situation of despair about themselves; it drives them into deeper despair or into a compromise between their actual being and what they feel they ought to be. The Christian ministry is one of reconciliation, and as Tillich says, "it is a sad fact that many people can find the word of reconciliation, not in the words of the minister, but in the words of the psychological helper."³⁰

The church may need to renounce not only old truths

²⁹See Bertram Lewin, The Psychoanalysis of Elation (New York: Norton, 1950), and Otto Fenichel, The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis (New York: Norton, 1945), for discussion of the symbiotic-union in alcoholism, drug-addictions, the elations and manias. See also, Howard Clinebell, Jr., Understanding and Counseling the Alcoholic (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), for discussion of alcoholism and religion, e.g., finding "God in a bottle."

³⁰Tillich, "The Relevance . . .," pp. 25-26.

but old terms if its ministry is to be relevant to our time, for it must communicate the message of the new reality, as an answer to the questions implied in human existence, in the language of its people. They understand an analysis of "man against himself" without using terms like "original sin" which may have lost their meaning and power. Man's despair about himself is described in terms of "meaninglessness" and "emptiness." A psycho-analysis of this despair reveals deficiencies in Hope, Will, and Purpose. Tillich points out that the church can provide an answer to such despair and the questions implied in existence only if it is united with the insights into the dynamics of man's life as a personality, generally and individually.

Formulas like the guidance, power, love, communion of the Divine Spirit are irrelevant if their significance for the relation of the unconscious and the conscious in man is not taken into consideration, or if the structures of moral and conventional repression are not understood, or if the demonic-divine ambiguity of 'being religious' is not described, or if the self-contempt and self-hate in what is called 'self-love' is not recognized, and the immensely difficult act of necessary self-love in the sense of self-acceptance is not emphasized. A minister who is not aware of these problems and speaks emphatically . . . about the gift of the Holy Spirit is irrelevant to our time.³¹

Recognition and appreciation of these dynamics, and of the psychosexual and psychosocial conflicts that they encompass is essential to understanding the moods and behaviors during the holiday. Such understanding is necessary if the church

³¹Ibid., p. 33.

is to minister relevantly and redemptively--if the ministry of reconciliation is to be genuine at Christmas.

The church's task must be integrative if it is to be redemptive and thus it need guard against becoming an agent of repression and denial of the abysmal side of being. It must be responsible for both the destructive and creative forces in man's instinctual and unconscious depths if it is to be a relevant aid in the process of fulfillment, a growth-producing and reconciling resource for persons in conflict, and a redemptive fellowship binding the finite and the infinite in creative love. As civilization must grow, so much the church, toward a non-repressive mode of existence, where the instinctual needs and satisfactions, which have hitherto remained tabooed or repressed, can be integrated through non-repressive sublimation.³² In its myth and rite the church has provided for such integration; it need be equally creative in all its functions.

The church should be no different, essentially, at Christmas than at any other time of the year. The pastoral functions (healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciliation) may alternate in priority but must never be exclusive of

³²See Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization (New York: Vintage Books, 1962). Marcuse discusses the concept of non-repressive sublimation wherein the sexual impulses, without losing their erotic energy, transcend their immediate object and eroticize normally non- and anti-erotic relationships between the individuals, and between them and their environment.

one another. Acceptance and care, understanding and love pertain to no season in particular but are qualities of the infinite and timeless. Crisis and conflict, anxiety and repression, all inherent in being human exist from the moment of birth to death. Certain basic life-crises may be intensified at Christmas and, for many, the church thus becomes more needed and therefore more significant than at other times of the year.

The church is, obviously, vitally interested in Christmas, and each of its activities should make themselves count by contributing significantly to the growth of persons in their ability to live creatively and to love themselves, others, and God more fully. Where hope is feeble and faith unsure, where mistrust exceeds trust and doubt and shame prevail, and where initiative and purpose are suppressed by guilt, Christmas can be a critical time, for the sheer "emotional baggage" of the festival can tip the imbalance further. Sorrow may prevail over joy; darkness over light. "Joy to the world" will be empty words echoing in the dark halls if the church does not appreciate and understand the crises of its people at Christmas. To ignore, condemn, or reject these troubled persons by offering false hope, unrealistic certitude, or unholy moralisms makes a sham out of the religious rites, for the light which they desperately need comes in the power of acceptance and love. It is not in the loves which man creates but

in the Love in which man can participate that there is reconciliation of the alienations within and among individuals.

Love is the infinite which is given to the finite. Therefore we love in others, for we do not merely love others, but we love the Love that is in them and which is more than their or our Love.³³

The message of Christmas is one of love and creativity, the fact of which unites the finite and infinite. The Christmas story is wholly human and wholly divine; only a literal interpretation of the Virgin birth story makes it less, the very fact of which violates the integrity of the human-divine polarity.³⁴

Some activities, myths and rites of the church during the Christmas holiday, specifically worship, prayer, communion, baptism, and invitation to membership are discussed in the next section. These functions all serve as need-satisfying resources and it is in this respect that they are presented.

IV. THE SERVICE OF WORSHIP AND PRE-GENITAL PSYCHODYNAMICS

It was discussed above that some of the moods and behaviors of Christmas have their roots in a sense of separation and estrangement within and among persons. Loneliness

³³Tillich, Biblical Religion . . ., p. 173.

³⁴See Appendix B for a psychoanalyst's understanding of Christmas which expresses the love and creativity theme of the holiday.

is a common feeling during the holiday, both in those who are actually alone and those who share the holiday with others. The lonely person tends to be absorbed in himself and his lot in life.

Corporate worship can contribute to the health and holiness of persons to the degree that it helps them experience a sense of belonging and personal integration, diminishing their guilt and obsession with themselves. It can help overcome loneliness by aiding in the re-establishment of a sense of trust, providing for worthy self-investment, and being a resource of strength for handling problems constructively. Persons can find a great deal of support in the experience of worship.

An excellent discussion of worship is found in the book Mental Health Through Christian Community, in which the experience of worship is analyzed in terms of personal integration and transcendence, spiritual feeding, the enhancement of trust, the resolving of guilt, facing reality, self-investment, and as a way of handling crises of life.³⁵

In "Prayer and Worship Re-Examined," Ross Snyder describes worship as a "return" from a far country where one lives estranged.³⁶ He sees it as encounter with the personal which awakens powers and transcendence within us.

³⁵Clinebell, Mental Health . . . , pp. 59ff.

³⁶Ross Snyder, "Prayer and Worship Re-Examined," Pastoral Psychology, XI (March 1960), 48.

It is transaction--an actual interchange of energy which involves openness on the part of the prayer. Clinebell describes a "good church" as one within which "persons find a quality of relatedness which satisfies their heart-hungers."³⁷ Worship then, as described by these writers, repeats in symbolic and actual ways the experience of the infant in his absolute dependency, but offers the individual, through participation in the service, experience of affirmation and trust. Through the symbolism of myth and ritual and the participation in the group, one can find verification of his need to trust. (The dynamics and relevance of religion to the restoration of faith were discussed earlier in this chapter; see pp. 192ff) Worship offers to the individual, year around, a way of symbolically working through the conflicts of the early life-crises, and such opportunity is especially significant at Christmas when some of those crises predominate in intensity.

Prayer

Prayer means letting go of one's egocentric isolation and becoming able to live in relatedness. It is the heart of worship, and is an act of love which results from choosing to respond to God's love. It can be an effective way of overcoming the fear of loss of love and of being abandoned, and aid the restoration of hope (cf. III, p. 104).

³⁷Clinebell, Mental Health . . . , p. 25.

by risking to open oneself to the almighty who has the power of life and death. In The Varieties of Religious Experience, William James characterizes prayer as "intercourse with an ideal companion," and as a kind of inward communion or conversation with the power recognized as divine.³⁸ In the setting of worship and the assurance of grace an individual, through prayer, may resolve (even temporarily) ambivalence toward the object he both loves and hates (fears). This ambivalence may be of contemporary origin; it may be of the individual's experience with his mother (oral stage) albeit unconscious. Verbalization is one of the essential functions of the ego and adds to the ego's ability to cope with the vicissitudes of reality. Prayer at Christmas, therefore, can be a vital activity for person's suffering from unresolved conflicts.

Confession and Resolution of Guilt

Worship aids in the resolution of guilt, over contemporary or historical (and unconscious) activities, thoughts, and feelings.³⁹ It enhances awareness of guilt and provides for confession which is emotionally cathartic in and of itself, especially in an atmosphere in which

³⁸William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (New York: Modern Library, 1902), p. 454.

³⁹Guilt over oral, anal, and phallic hostilities, for example, which may persist in the unconscious, as well as guilt over specific deed later in life.

forgiveness is already present. It aids in the awareness of cleansing and forgiveness, and encourages the response of seeking to meet rather than deny the needs of oneself and others.

Uniting in both the prayers of the church and personal prayer persons may, therefore, be freed of some of the inner bindings preventing joy.

Holy Communion

Holy Communion is an especially important dimension of worship and, because of its significance, should be (as it usually is) a regular part of the church's ministry at Christmas. It is a symbol, par excellence, of the giving, feeding function of the church (and of the mother).

Satisfaction at the mother's breast and in her care fulfilled the infantile need for security, and much of the "orality" at Christmas can be seen as a regressive attempt to again achieve the "peace" and "blissful" security once known and unconsciously remembered. Holy Communion is a re-enactment of the impulses and conflicts of the "oral" stage "when food was love and lack of it death."⁴⁰

It has been pointed out that unacceptable (threatening) impulses can be transformed through symbolic, ritual practices into socially constructive feelings and motivation removed of the threat of punishment. "Oral" hostility,

⁴⁰Clinebell, Mental Health . . . , p. 64.

for example, can be expressed and thus relieved by biting and chewing the bread, without depriving the individual of the wine. The same (oral) impulses are seen operative in the socially and personally destructive illness of alcoholism, yet even there it has been shown that in drinking the alcoholic sometimes seeks a pseudo-religious experience (through ecstasy).⁴¹ The union of God and man in ecstasy has been a religious idea as far back as the Greeks.⁴² The Mithraic Hermes liturgy invoked an intimate union with the deity, expressed in the chant, "I in thee and thou in me." The same ideas of union are seen in the scripture passages frequently used during services of Holy Communion: "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him" (John 6:56); "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit" (John 15:5). The desire to consume and become like one who is both feared and loved is inherent in both the "oral" stage dynamics and the receiving of Holy Communion. In Emotional Problems of Living, the authors illustrate the value and importance of oral incorporation by referring to the partaking of the body of Christ.

⁴¹For a comprehensive discussion of the use of alcohol as a religious substitute, see Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., "Philosophical-Religious Factors in the Etiology and Treatment of Alcoholism," Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol, XXIV (Fall 1963).

⁴²See Gilbert Murray, Five Stages of Greek Religion (New York: Columbia University Press, 1925), p. 183.

This is a symbolism which means taking Christ's ideas as well as his body within us, and we are supposed to make new commitments to the religious principles connected with the church. In other words, we have here the process of taking in a person, and the principles and causes that he stood for. In the symbolism of communion the church must long ago have recognized that ideas are taken in along with food by way of the mouth.⁴³

The history of communion goes back to the totem meals consisting of the flesh and blood of a totem animal which was kin to both the members of the clan and their god. This is a prototype of the modern religious practice. The psychic mechanism recognized in such rites is that of strengthening of group ties through identification by oral incorporation, a defense against object loss and one which is employed by the ego to replenish a failing libido supply.

The church may resist such interpretation of its sacramental rites, the psychoanalysts may deprecate as illusion the idea that by the ingestion of the sacrificial victim or his representation the participant acquires the strength and vigor of the god. "It is not illusory, however, that a sense of renewal or rebirth, an increase of ego libido, does result from the experience of participation in a ritual meal."⁴⁴

The fact is that the crisis and conflict of the first year of life, upon which the virtue Hope is founded, are

⁴³0. Spurgeon English and Gerald Pearson, Emotional Problems of Living (New York: Norton, 1955), p. 35.

⁴⁴Mortimer Ostow, Drugs in Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy (New York: Basic Books, 1962), p. 266.

innate, unconscious dimensions of the sacrament of Holy Communion. It is understood, psychoanalytically, that the rite does enhance the strength of the ego. People who have received Holy Communion report in their own language this fact: they feel renewed and more hopeful.

Holy Communion, then, is an extremely significant function of the church at Christmas, when the "oral" stage crises are intensified. Receiving Holy Communion may relieve Christmas anxiety and depression and enable the celebrant to have a more joyful holiday. The chief occasions for human unhappiness lie in loss of object, loss of self-esteem, and loss of ego libido. Prayer and Holy Communion can help restore each of these losses.

Baptism

In *The Sane Society*, Erich Fromm says that the mentally healthy person, among other things, "is in the process of being born as long as he is alive, and considers the gift of life the most precious chance he has."⁴⁵ Yet, as was discussed in Part II, Chapter I, being born confronts one with death and subjects him to the anxieties and fears surrounding death. Some of the anxiety and depression of Christmas may be understood to result from the emphasis upon birth during the holiday.

Christian baptism at Christmas may, then, be a rite

⁴⁵Fromm, op. cit., p. 275.

needed by many people, for it is one of facing death by symbolically dying and being reborn.

Are ye ignorant that all we who are baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death . . . (Romans 6:3f).

Like communion, baptism has a history reaching back into pre-Christian, pagan rite.⁴⁶ And like communion, there is the obvious symbolization of union and identification with the deity. Incorporation is inherent in the rite as it is in communion, although in baptism it is "being incorporated" rather than "incorporating" which is acted-out.⁴⁷ This is especially true of baptism by immersion.

It should be recalled that, in fact, complete union (fusion) means death, for individual identity ceases to be. There is, then, a paradoxical dimension to both communion and baptism: the symbolic union is at the expense of ego identity, yet participation in the rite can enhance identity by strengthening the ego (because, in actuality, the whole process is accomplished in fantasy). The polarity of union-identity must be maintained: the emphasis upon union (and conforming sameness) at the expense of individual identity tips the balance unfavorably, interfering with integration

⁴⁶See Vergilius Ferm (ed.), An Encyclopedia of Religion (New York: Philosophical Library, 1945), p. 53.

⁴⁷This is an important distinction, for it is relevant to overcoming the "oral" fears of being eaten, devoured, and swallowed-up. See Part II, Chapter II.

and fulfillment.

Baptism by immersion can truly be a "death experience." It has been reported, and can be recalled by the writer that at his own baptism (by immersion, age 12), fantasies of being drowned were conscious. Anxiety about death may, then, be partially overcome by "entering into death" and being "reborn" to "walk in newness of life."⁴⁸ The Light which penetrates the Darkness, the Life which transcends Death--these symbols of Christmas can become experientially real in baptism.

Thus, baptism can be a significant, needed, and reaffirming function of the church at Christmas. As Fromm pointed out that "the process of being born as long as he is alive" is a characteristic of the healthy individual, Paul pointed out that he (like every man) "died daily." The reassurance and strength achieved through receiving Holy Communion is available to person's frequently--in some churches, weekly. It would seem, that baptism too should be made available for repeated participation, for those who seem to "die" (in loneliness, separation, and anxiety) more than they are "reborn" might find the strength they lack replenished by being baptized. Nevertheless, the church should surely provide Christian baptism at Christmas.

⁴⁸Cf. discussion on suicide as a way of overcoming fear of death by embracing it, Part II, Chapter I.

Invitation to Membership

In Psychoanalysis and Religion, Fromm observes that everyone has a basic need for a "system of thought and action shared by a group which gives the individual a frame of orientation and an object of devotion."⁴⁹ Such a system of thought comprises a philosophy of life and a value system of fundamental attitudes. The church can, and does, provide for satisfaction of the need.

Belonging to a group in and of itself aids in the establishment of identity, provides for relationship and a sense of belonging, and can enhance personal integration by alleviation of destructive impulses through social mechanisms. The church, as a group, can aid or inhibit growth and integration like any other group. Yet its myth and rites add to its group functions a valuable bonus over many groups, for "myth and rite, the carriers of symbolic wishes, dialectically foster individuation through increase of real mystery of reality through identification with, and reintrojection of, wishes projected into the myth."⁵⁰ The individuation enhanced by myth and rite is primarily an intrapsychic process, although dependent upon group functioning. Individuals are afforded even greater opportunity of overcoming separation within and among people by belonging to

⁴⁹Erich Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 21.

⁵⁰Stern, op. cit., p. 72.

a "good church" where "heart-hungers" are satisfied in genuine relatedness. Thus, the negative responses to Christmas may be alleviated and partially resolved by joining, belonging, and/or reaffirming membership in a church. A warm, caring, genuine invitation to membership and opportunity for recommitment should, therefore, be included in the Christmas ministry of the church, for becoming related--intrapsychically and interpersonally--fosters reconciliation of negative responses.

CHAPTER II

THE CRISIS: LOVE VS. AGGRESSION

Since immemorial times religion has been an aid in controlling hate and egoism, factors inherent in being but destructive and dis-integrative. The desire for goodness (which originates in infancy) stirs greed and aggression as well as love and tenderness. Aggression and sexuality, being integral parts of human nature, are bound to function, for either good or ill, while life lasts. If the attempt is made to deny their rights and exclude them from participation in life for good, they must flow into channels of hate and destructiveness. The psychiatrist, Freida Fromm-Reichmann once commented that, in contrast to Freud's day, hostility has become more frequently repressed than sex in our day.⁵¹ When aggression is denied opportunity for expression in impersonal ways which offer great constructive outlets for it--in the intellectual sphere, in exploration and experimentation--it will find its outlet in a personal way, e.g., in domination and persecution against the beliefs, and ultimately against the persons, of men and women. Denial to man of constructive exercise of his aggression, dissociates and excludes aggression from fusion and partnership with love and leads to discharge in forms of destructiveness. And without sufficient

⁵¹Clinebell, Mental Health . . . , p. 41.

satisfaction of his basic instincts (sexuality and aggression) life itself becomes valueless to man; he is reduced to apathy and uselessness. A denial of the existence and value of these instincts is an illusion, and is to that extent a false foundation upon which to build a way of life. To support and confirm the illusion results in self-deception, anxiety and doubt, or to cynicism; and then faith in goodness becomes in danger of being lost altogether.

When faith in goodness weakens by lack of verification, our need to love, as our strongest security against the anxiety of hate and destructiveness within, together with the problems of guilt which are inseparable from love, and the standards of conscience and morality that spring from our guilt, all suffer from neglect, are denied, and may starve in their turn.

The annual crisis at Christmas is basically the conflict of our love and our hateful aggression. It is a crisis of current nature involving contemporary relationships; it is a crisis of the unconscious conflicts brought to a head by the festival itself. Our inner psychological struggles--between our loves and hates--need to be aided by conscious attention and effort, and the church can be such an aid by being a community of grace and a place where faith in goodness is verified.

In its search for genuine goodness and in its fear of being deceived, this age of 'realism' may have overshoot a mark; there is a reality within us as well as without, the facts not only of our ruthlessness and

greed but also of our need to love and to be loving, which we suppress and do not honestly avow.⁵²

The church affirms this inner and outer reality as being the infinite Love which is given to the finite, but attempts have been made to de-sexualize the love and to extinguish the hate. These very attempts are deceiving for their accomplishment can only be at the expense of reality with the consequent mistrust of love and goodness.

The needed support for honesty and goodness within--which are part of internal emotional reality and the source of stable emotional security--is coming from the psycho-therapeutic helpers. It must come too, from the church, or the church will fail to be redemptive and the vicious circle of aggression and disruption will increase its momentum.

The ministry of the church, at Christmas and year around, must recognize, accept, and increase man's understanding of both the inevitability and the potential value of sexual and aggressive processes. In such understanding will the archaic element in our fear of them and reactions to them diminish and be controlled. The church, through its myth and rite, but also through its programs of education, fellowship, and service, can provide means to allow these natural forces some outlet and to use them as fully as possible in constructive ways. To instill guilt and

⁵²Joan Riviere, "Hate, Greed and Aggression," in Melanie Klein and Joan Riviere, Love, Hate and Reparation (London: Hogarth Press, 1962), p. 51.

shame, to foster fear, and to exploit insecurity is disintegrative and irreconciling.

A ministry of reconciliation can come about only by understanding, which derives so much from tolerance, in other words, from imagination, sympathy, and love. The crises of the life cycle which underlie the crisis of Christmas can only find resolution and integrity in the power of acceptance and love. It is not in sentimentality or possessive emotion, but in the steady recognition of others' uniqueness and a sustained intention to seek their good. This is both the responsibility of parents and the essence of the relevant and redemptive ministry.

I. CONCLUSIONS

The heading of this chapter, "The Crisis: Love vs. Aggression," may remind the reader of the thesis beginning this inquiry, that hostility is an inherent and intrinsic dimension of Christmas, while at once indicate a general conclusion of the study.

Sexuality and aggression, viewed as the basic instincts in psychoanalytic theory, begin and remain forever as polarities in tension, intrapsychically and interpersonally. Love, a refinement of both instincts, is only threatened by aggression when the instinctual forces flow into channels of hate and destructiveness; the aggressive instinct takes on the qualities of hostility and rage when

instinctual needs are frustrated. Satisfaction of libidinal and aggressive needs is, however, always balanced or imbalanced with frustration of these needs, making hostility an inevitable affect. Man becomes angry when he doesn't get what he wants, needs, or thinks he needs.

Although other factors influence man's behavior and moods (values, for example), these amoral instinctual drives are the ground out of which they emerge, and in which they can in the final analysis be understood. Within this frame of reference it may be concluded then, that the Christmas festival and its celebration is a time when the tension between these forces is sharpened, because Christmas revitalizes, deep within man's psyche, the basic and critical conflicts of the first years of life when the instincts functioned in their full, most unrepressed strength. The psychosexual and psychosocial dynamics of these early developmental stages persist in adult life, always potentially ready to erupt in conflict again.

Christmas, as a social festival, can be genetically traced to conflict, and can be seen as an attempt to cope with and resolve the very conflicts which gave it its birth. The sun's re-birth at the winter solstice, for example, reassured man in his fear of death (and conflicts regarding both death and life) without abolishing death.

Yet the threat of non-being is productive of anxiety and may be a determinant of hostility for it threatens lack

of satisfaction and fulfillment in living. The fact and celebration of birth, however, confronts man with death, and thus can be understood as a possible determinant of Christmas depression (of which hostility is always a dimension).

Efforts toward the abolishment of the negative or potentially negative dynamics of being, an impossibility as long as there is life but deceptively achieved through repression and denial, are malignant in effect. Conflict is not solved by the abolition of either factor involved. Rather, resolution should be sought, an accomplishment of the ego achieved by maintaining the tension between positive and negative. In such achievement, hostility, for example, can be removed of its destructive effects by a rechanneling of aggression toward constructive ends. Maintenance of tension affords reconciliation and integration.

Either excessive satisfaction or frustration of instinctual needs at any of the developmental stages restricts or inhibits full growth in succeeding stages. It may be, then, that oral, anal, or phallic dynamics will predominate in an individual's personality, and characterize much of what he does and is. Yet growth to succeeding stages does not mean that the needs and dynamics of the earlier stages vanish. They do not, but remain within as areas of both pleasure and pain. Thus in both healthy and pathological ways oral dynamics, for example, characterize much of the mood and behavior at Christmas. Joy may be healthy, but

elation may be a pathological defense against depression and hostility; a Christmas cocktail may add to the pleasure and delight of celebration whereas excessive indulgence may spoil the happiness sought. In similar ways is Christmas infused with anal and phallic dynamics.

The conclusion is that Christmas has many infantile and unconscious associations, for better and worse, and that many of its characteristics, especially in terms of its (religious) myth and rite, can be seen as ways man has devised to help himself cope with the vicissitudes and complexities of life which have many roots in the dynamics of the early years of life, the memories and consequences of which lie deep in the unconscious.

Man needs to develop the full power and liberty of his emotions, without paying the price of fixing them too firmly on any one object or idea or without suffering from a fixation at an infantile stage of development. To be truly free and yet social means to cultivate detachment as opposed to alienation; one can then participate fully as an individual without sacrificing personal integrity. Some of the functions of the church provide for participation which enhances individuality. Participation in the myth and rite may increase ego libido making more possible resolution of conflict. The church's ministry at Christmas may then aid immeasurably to the holiness and wholeness of the holiday, by providing for discharge of repressed instinctual

drives, increasing ego libido, and by being a reaffirming community in which persons can restore their sense of basic trust.

II. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This inquiry into Christmas from a psychoanalytic and ego-psychology point of view could well be expanded to include the developmental stages of the whole life cycle. Discussion of the succeeding psychosexual and psychosocial crises, and the basic virtues emerging from them could provide for a more inclusive understanding of the holiday in terms of its meaning and significance to persons. This would allow for discussion of other determinants than instinctual sexuality and aggression, e.g., values, ideals, conscious purposes and intentions, and their relevance to the form and celebration of Christmas. Such discussion could also be applied to the anthropological review of the establishment of Christmas.

Crisis is a fact subject not only to psychological but to theological interpretation as well. Together with expansion of psychosexual and psychosocial factors, a theological understanding of crisis and of Christmas would add to an understanding of both conscious and unconscious determinants and meanings of the holiday.

The study could also be expanded to include more specific discussion of what to do about the crises of

Christmas. Further discussion of church activities, and of personal ways of helping, would enhance the practical relevance of the dissertation.

Inclusion of case studies and personal experiences of celebrating persons would help to illustrate and "bring to life" the expressions and consequences of the unconscious processes associated with Christmas.

The unity of birth and death was discussed as a fact of life and a relevant dimension of the negative responses to Christmas. The study could be expanded to include discussion of the New Year's celebration, of which "re-birth" and "new life" are particularly relevant dimensions, and of Easter in which the same factors pertain.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Erikson defines the basic virtues, the rudiments of which develop in the psychosexual, psychosocial stages of life as follows:

Hope is the enduring belief in the attainability of fervent wishes, in spite of the dark urges and rages which mark the beginning of existence.¹

Will is the unbroken determination to exercise free choice as well as self-restraint, in spite of the unavoidable experience of shame and doubt in infancy.²

Purpose is the courage to envisage and pursue valued goals uninhibited by the defeat of infantile fantasies, by guilt and by the foiling fear of punishment.³

Competence is the free exercise of dexterity and intelligence in the completion of tasks, unimpaired by infantile inferiority.⁴

Fidelity is the ability to sustain loyalties freely pledged in spite of the inevitable contradictions of value systems.⁵

Love is mutuality of devotion forever subduing the antagonisms inherent in divided function.⁶

Care is the widening concern for what has been generated by love, necessity, or accident; it overcomes the ambivalence adhering to irreversible obligation.⁷

Wisdom is detached concern with life itself, in the face of death itself.⁸

¹Erik Erikson, Insight and Responsibility (New York: Norton, 1964), p. 118.

²Ibid., p. 119. ³Ibid., p. 119. ⁴Ibid., p. 124.

⁵Ibid., p. 125. ⁶Ibid., p. 129. ⁷Ibid., p. 131.

⁸Ibid., p. 133.

APPENDIX B

The creative dimension of love, especially in sexual love, is well illustrated in this Christmas Story by a practicing psychoanalyst.

A CHRISTMAS STORY

A long, long time ago, before two world wars left two world junk yards, before the baking to death of six million brothers, before the exploding of our Devil bomb over a defenseless city of our brothers, three wise men gathered in Vienna to ponder over what made people sick. These troubled physicians had tried to help with the faulty, blind methods of those days, when even a dream was considered silly nonsense. They saw busy and intelligent men spending most of their time and energy on bigger and better ways of hurting or killing one another. In fact, they knew that things stunk to high heaven. Had the Saviours of men become the Master Bakers of men? What had happened to our sense of sin? Wait--wait, for we are going beyond our story of the wise men.

It was a festive evening in December when the three met again in the park to discuss human troubles. During a lull in the conversation it became apparent that a young couple were making love in the stable across the path. In fact, this was all that could be seen or heard for a short while. After the happy couple went their way, the three wise men discussed what they had seen. The first man shouted that he saw a struggle for superiority and that the most important thing to man was who was on top. The second wise man saw in the scene in the stable many levels and many things in the racial unconsciousness of man, and saw at high tide some entangled glow worms washing up on the moonlight shore. The third wise man, tired by now, briefly stated his view. He thought that what he saw had something to do with sex and the pleasure in sex.

That was a long, long time ago. The three wise men have many self anointed disciples and these disciples argue in so many ways that it makes us feel again that we are in the Tower of Babel. If we go back to that scene in the stable we do make sense of it all for ourselves. If we wonder about the scene and then ask ourselves how much a baby is worth to his mother and

his father, we know that a king is born again!⁹

⁹David W. Morgan, M. D., Unpublished writing, Pasadena, California.

APPENDIX C

John Ciardi has expressed well the dynamics of the first three developmental stages in his poem "A Christmas Wish."

A CHRISTMAS WISH

Caught as we all are in the human condition--
 Subject to vices variously begun--in curiosity,
 from nature, of malaise.
 Hungry for joy and fed less than our hunger.
 Charitable when we can save ourselves from more
 investment than we know how to bear.
 Simple in our silences, made intricate by vocabu-
 laries.
 Greedy because we were all once children.
 Foregoing because we have read dreams and visions
 that do not come to us when we lay the book by.
 Loving in desperation, in fear of loneliness.
 Begetting in the ersons and Olympics of first love
 or in the habituated rutting of the long bed
 the children that sadden us to an uneasy tolerance.
 Afraid of death in our dying and liberated only
 partially by the partial loss of ignorance.
 Eager for friendships from which we may demand
 what we ourselves give with two motives, if at all.
 Suspected by States for our best intuitions.
 Solemn at funerals but glad to have outlived one
 other as proof that we are, after all, right.
 Liars because we must live in what seems possible.
 Fools because we lie, and fools again for assuming
 the possible to be any more likely than the impossi-
 ble.
 Faithless because our houses are destroyable
 but not our fears. Brave because we dare not stop
 to think. Proud because we are wrong. Wrathful
 because we are powerless. Envious because we are
 uncertain. Lazy because we were born. Avaricious
 because we are afraid. Gluttonous because bellies
 are a mother to warm and assure us. Murderous and
 adulterous because opportunity and energy will
 sometimes be added to motive. Ungrateful because
 gratitude is a debt, and because it is easier to
 betray our benefactors than to await new benefactions.
 Religious because it is dark at night, and because
 we have been instructed, and because it is easier

to obey than to believe our sense or to learn to doubt them exhaustively.

Sad because we are as we are, time-trapped, and because our images of ourselves and the facts of ourselves wake at night and bicker and lay bets with one another, with us as the stakes.

Then moved to pity at last because we hear and are saddened--

Nearly beautiful in the occasions of our pity not of ourselves. Nearly affectionate when we are free of pain.

Caught as we are in these and our other conditions-- Which include a distaste for the littleness of our motives and, therefore, some wish to live to some reality. Terrified by realities. Addicted to evasions. Daring, once, to look into the mirror and to see and not look away.

Beginning again, then, with those who share with us and with whom we share the sorrows of the common failure. Fumbling at last to the language of a sympathy that can describe, and that will be, we are persuaded, sufficiently joy when we find in one another its idioms.

Caught as we are in these defining conditions-- I wish you the one fact of ourselves that is inexhaustible and which, therefore, we need not hoard nor begrudge. (Let mercy be its name till its name be found.) And wish that to the mercy that is possible because it takes nothing from us and may, therefore, be given indifferently, there by joined the mercy that adds us to one another.

John Ciardi¹⁰

¹⁰John Ciardi, "A Christmas Wish," Saturday Review, XLVI (December 21, 1963), 16.

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